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DEADWOOD DICK GAZED IN DUMFOUNDED SILENCE AT THE STRANGE INSCRIPTION.
"DOOMED!—DOOMED!" GLEASON GASPED, IN HORROR

OR,

·:4-11-44:·

A MYSTERY.

BY E. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A PECULIAR CASE TO TACKLE.

AMONG the passengers on a train which made the trip from New York to Buffalo, on a certain occasion, there were two of special interest to our readers—Richard M. Bristol, better known as Deadwood Dick, Jr., the Wild West Detective, and Billy Bucket, once a street boy of Gotham, but, later, the assistant of the noted Westerner.

They had been summoned from New York to

engage in detective work, the nature of which was unknown to them.

Reaching Buffalo they were met by a man whose characteristics were decidedly of the German type. He was not a person of prepossessing appearance, but his sharp, shrewd eyes indicated that he was much smarter than he looked. Though plainly dressed, he had a commanding, soldier-like style of movement which indicated that, at some time in his life, he had been in the army.

"Mr. Bristles!" he exclaimed, tapping Dick familiarly on the shoulder, "I was glad to meet you!"

"Well, who are you?" demanded Dick, curtly. "I don't know you."

"My name is D. Ennis. I am in the local employ, and was sent here to meet you on der arrival of dot trains. Dot is it."

"Well—"

Here Billy put in a word.

"Did you ketch one?" he inquired with a broad grin. "Don't yer think he's made a mistake, an' that his name is Dennis?"

Dick gave Billy a warning glance, and then remarked:

"I presume, Mr. Ennis, you can prove that you are what you claim to be?"

"Vell, der chief vill dell you I helps der force in various ways, und I vas here to dake you to him. I knowed you at vonce when I sees you."

"We will go there shortly. Just now, we are in need of food."

"Den come mit me," Ennis directed; and he led the way to a restaurant, where their orders were at once filled.

"Can you tell me for what purpose we are wanted here?" the Wild West Detective then asked.

"Yes. You're to inspect dot haunted house, und dot haunted man whose name vas James Gleason."

"A haunted house, and a haunted man, eh? Well, where does this man live?"

"Out purty much by Black Rock, on Niagara street."

"Who is this man Gleason?"

"He vos once a broker, and rich."

"Is he married?"

"Nein. He is von of dem old bachelor men, like myself, see, who don't take no stock in der vimmens."

"Guess et's de 'vimmens' as don't take no stock in you, Dennis!" put in Billy Bucket, as if to tantalize the German. "Dot vimmens, vot vas got stucken on you, she vas off her feed!"

"Billy!" warned Dick. "Don't forget your good manners. Never mind the boy, Mr. Ennis, seeing that the German's face was flushed with anger."

Lunch finished the trio made their way to the office of the chief of police, by whom they were received cordially.

"I am glad to meet you, Bristol," he declared.

"How was the health of Mr. Byrnes, when you left New York?"

"Excellent, sir."

"Glad to hear it, as we are old friends. I wrote to him to see if he could send me a good detective, who was not known in this city. He recommended you, and so I directed him to send you on."

"Well, sir, I am here, with my boy partner, to receive orders. What is it you want?"

"The case is a very peculiar one. Are you of a superstitious turn of mind?"

"Not at all."

"Not afraid of ghosts, eh?"

"Not a bit. In fact, I rather admire them."

The chief smiled.

"This case may test your nerves. Out on Niagara street, near Black Rock, lives a wealthy man who is haunted by a ghost!"

"What sort of a ghost?"

"A beautiful young woman!"

"Well, that is not so bad, if we must have a ghost; but, isn't his trouble another kind of spirits?"

"Oh! no; Mr. Gleason is a man who never, I believe, drinks to excess. This apparition appeared to him one night some six months ago, standing by his bedside. At first, he supposed it to be a hallucination, but, as it has reappeared every night since, the man has been led to regard it as a genuine ghost."

"Finally, nearly driven out of his mind, he applied for assistance, and I sent him one of the keenest men on my force, with instructions to visit Mr. Gleason and spend the night with him. The man reported, the next day, that, as the clock struck twelve, a beautiful girl, with flowing golden hair, and clad in a robe of immaculate white, appeared and uttered the favorite

policy numbers of the colored fraternity: 'Four, eleven, forty-four!'

"Gleason accompanied my man here, and vouched for the statement, also claiming that, whenever the ghost appeared, it was the same utterance, over and over again; after which the apparition would vanish as suddenly as it appeared!"

Dick had listened with due gravity, but both he and Billy Bucket found it hard to regard the matter seriously.

"I don't take much stock in this!" Dick admitted. "I never saw a ghost yet that couldn't be 'laid' with a bullet or a club."

"But, understand! Five of my best men have seen it."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. They are men whose veracity cannot be doubted."

"Are they to continue in the case?"

"No, sir; you couldn't get one of those five men to spend another night in Gleason's house if you were to pay them fifty dollars apiece!"

"I should certainly hate to take the risk," Dick laughed. "Detectives, as a rule, are not averse to collaring all the money that comes honestly in their way. Does this Mr. Gleason know that you sent for me?"

"He does; and, if you succeed in ferreting out this mystery, he will pay you well. While I am not superstitious, I am positive that there is something very mysterious afoot. Mr. Gleason's neighbors avoid him, and some of them even believe that he is possessed of the devil. Strange sounds nightly issue from his house, which cannot be accounted for; and the neighbors complain of disturbed rest."

"What business is Mr. Gleason in?"

"None, just now. Having acquired a fortune, he has no need to bother his head about business."

"What was formerly his business?"

"He was engaged as a stock-broker."

Conversation continued for some time longer, and the chief, though plainly not a believer in things supernatural, gave all possible information.

Obtaining Mr. Gleason's address, Dick and Billy set forth to see the haunted man, though Dick was thoroughly under the impression that his trip to Buffalo would prove a grand fizzle.

CHAPTER II.

THE HAUNTED MAN.

THE residence of Mr. Gleason was on the north side of the thoroughfare, and commanded an agreeable view of the Niagara.

It was a residence of modest proportions, rather plain as to exterior, but magnificent in the interior, as Dick quickly discerned.

The ring at the door brought to light a negro servant.

"I wish to see Mr. Gleason," Dick explained.

"Come in, sah! Givo me your name, and I will take it to de marster."

"Simply say I was sent by the chief of police, and came from New York."

"Very well, sah."

The darky then vanished through a rear door, and was gone several minutes.

When he returned he politely inquired:

"Be you de detective, sah?"

"I am."

"An' who am de kid?"

"My partner."

"Den come right in, sah! My marster will see you."

So they entered a spacious parlor which was magnificently furnished, and a model of good taste and neatness.

A man aged about forty was reclining on a sofa. He was tall, thin, pale and haggard.

He did not look like a man who was accustomed to strong drink, or, in fact, to any drink at all.

He wore a long beard which was carefully trimmed.

Both hair and beard were snowy white, and seemed to indicate that he had undergone an unusual amount of trouble.

He arose to meet them.

"My name is Richard Bristol," the detective at once explained.

"And you have come from the police?" Gleason questioned, as he motioned them to be seated.

"Yes, sir. I believe you require some one to ferret out a mystery—something of a ghostly character?"

"Exactly. That is just what I want. I am a haunted man, and life is being sapped away by this being, or spirit—whichever it may be. Six months ago, I was a strong, healthy man;

now, I am merely a shadow of my former self. After that apparition, ghost or devil came, I knew no sleep or rest. The first two times I saw it, I thought lightly of the matter, for, being a hearty eater, and many times a late eater, it occurred to me that I had been attacked with the nightmare."

"But, when this apparition reappeared, night after night, at the same time, and uttered that ominous 'Four, eleven, forty-four,' I began to get scared. Can you wonder?"

"Well, it is most singular. The chief says he has sent five men here, who could not again be tempted to enter your house."

"He is right. They were incredulous, at first, but when they saw the ghost, they were glad to get away in short order."

"Does this ghost appear every night?"

"Yes."

"Are you not subject to strange dreams? Are you positive that, when you saw this ghost, you were not laboring under a hallucination?"

"Certainly, I am positive. Why, when five men besides myself have seen the something, how can I be mistaken?"

This was an argument not easily met.

"Describe this alleged spook to the best of your ability," directed Dick, curiously.

Mr. Gleason reflected.

"Well," he replied, "she comes at midnight, almost to the minute, as I have told you. As she stands over my bed, I feel a terror which prevents me from taking critical notice, but I am prepared to say that she is beautiful to look upon. She is always clad in white, while an abundance of golden hair flows down over her shoulders."

"It strikes me," observed Dick, "that this spook business is a disease of your mind. However, as I have no fear of ghost, spook, bogie or witch, I will remain here. I and my young friend, who is also of my profession, will return later on. In the mean time, we will look around town and see where we can secure a reasonable-priced lodging-house."

Mr. Gleason interrupted quickly:

"Why, are you not my guests, when you are in my employ?" he demanded. "Did James Gleason call you all the way here from New York, to investigate a matter concerning himself, and allow you to put up with ordinary boarding-house accommodations? Not much, sir! You will stay here. I've great confidence in you, and, during the day, we will get better acquainted. To night, I want you to see the ghost!"

"I won't be here about that time!" declared Billy. "Got any barrels, or coal-boxes, a feller can get inter, mister?"

Deadwood Dick smiled as he reassuringly replied:

"Don't be afraid, Billy; the ghost won't tackle you!"

"Well, if she does, I'll run, that's all. I kin lick any kid o' my size in ther Fourth Ward, in New York, but I'll darned ef I'm up ter tacklin' customers from ther graveyard!"

"I have had to endure it for weeks and months," Gleason observed, gloomily.

"And you have really no clew to the mystery?" asked Dick, looking keenly at the master of the house.

"None."

"There is nothing in your past that helps you to an opinion, eh?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"If the ghost appears in your chamber, why don't you seize it?"

"I have tried, time and again."

"And in vain?"

"Yes. The ghost fades away into air, and I have my labor all for nothing. I have done all that was possible, but I remain as before—a haunted man!"

Gleason appeared to be thoroughly unmannered by the state of affairs.

The day passed. Gleason entertained them well, and, apparently mindful of their comfort, suggested that they retire early and get some sleep before midnight. Just before that hour he would call them.

This plan was carried out, and they were soon left alone in the chamber to which he conducted them.

"Dick," said Billy, "I don't like this racket for a cent. It strikes me we had better get back to New York!"

"Why, Billy, a game young lad like you ought not to be afraid of spooks."

"Wouldn't like ter meet one, though! No, darn me ef I would! I don't mind a graveyard after midnight, so much; ner a wake; but when et comes to sech a fine point as ghosts, why, I'd ruther you'd leave me out!"

"Can't do it!" laughed Dick, "for I don't know

of a better remedy for scaring this particular ghost from the door than you. If the ghost were to see you, it would surely run!"

"Yes; but it would be right *toward* me, boss. But say, though, what do ye think o' this biz, anyhow?"

"I'll give my opinion when I've seen the ghost," returned Dick.

"No chance ter doubt its bein' a real ghost, hey?"

"No chance, apparently."

Billy's manner was one of deep concern, real or feigned, so, Dick did not seem inclined to say much concerning the mystery.

"The ghost may be hidin' right in this room now," Mr. Bucket persisted. "Reckon I'll look around an' see!"

CHAPTER III.

THE GHOST!

THE room to which Dick and Billy had retired was a strange one, for the reason that all the walls were formed of panels.

"I kinder don't like this," Billy asserted. "Some o' these panels may sort o' get a move on themselves, and out will pop that ghost. I remember this panel racket, right well!"

"How's that, Billy?"

"Oh! it was down in New York. I hadn't only ten cents ter me name, so I tackled a ten-cent lodging-house on the Bowery. The room had panels, jest like these, only not so elegant. I took off my clothes, laid 'em on a chair that stood ag'in' the wall, and went to bed. Along about midnight I heerd a noise, an' settin' up, what d'ye s'pose I saw?"

"Well, what?"

"My clothes disappearin' through one o' them panels in de wall!"

"What did you do, then?"

"I howled! Der boss came up, and, when I s'plained de situation, he give me a cast-off suit of clothes about ten times too large for me, and then told me to take a quiet sneak by myself. I snooked!"

"Well, Billy, I don't think there is much danger of your getting your clothes stolen here."

"Maybe not," was the reply; "but, I ain't runnin' no risks. I'll keep 'em on!"

And he did, which was most judicious, for, when Dick awoke after a sound sleep, his own were gone!

"Well, this beats the mischief!" he ejaculated. "Hev! Billy; wake up!"

"What d'yer want?" demanded the gamin, drowsily.

"Where's my clothes?"

"Dunno; I ain't keepin' stock o' yer duds. Told you my experience, but you didn't seem to cotton to it; so ef you've lost yer wearin gear et serves you darned and well right!"

"You young rascal, I believe you've hid 'em."

"Well, search de room ef you think so. You Western fellers are most s'picious fellers I ever see'd. What d'ye s'pose I want wid yer clothes, when I've got a suit of my own, an' got 'em on me, in de bargain? Don't s'pect me to wear two suits at once, do yer?"

"No; but you might be puttin' up a job on me!"

"Nix-ee job," Billy replied.

Dick was hardly prepared to believe this, however, so, in his undergarments, he set to work, and searched every nook and corner of the big room, but all to no avail.

Nowhere could his clothes be found!

What was he to do? It was night, and all the clothing-stores were likely to be closed.

He was most undeniably in a fix.

Billy was now rolling on the bed, greatly amused at the novelty of Dick's predicament.

"That ghost won't be wid yer, ter-night, boss. You'd skeer her out o' six months' growth!"

"I'll break—your body, if ye don't shut up!" cried Dick, savagely.

Just then, there came a loud rap on the door.

"Go to the door!" ordered Dick, making a dart for a closet.

"Nix-ee; not me!" replied Mr. Bucket.

"That's ther darned old ghost!"

And he immediately covered himself up in the blankets, so as not to see the apparition.

But it did not prove to be Miss Spook.

Hellol open the door!"

It was the voice of Mr. Gleason, and, considerably relieved, Bristol complied with his request.

"What is all the racket up here?" demanded Gleason, apprehensively. "Have you seen it?"

"No; but it has seen me, in great shape. Does this ghost of yours wear male attire?"

"No. She always comes in immaculate white. Why do you ask?"

"This estimable ghost of yours has stolen my

breaches. Not only them, but my vest and coat also. I presume if I had left off my undergarments, they would be gone, too! With my clothes went my money and watch. Now, what the deuce am I to do?"

"Go get a palm-leaf, boss!" chimed in Billy.

Mr. Gleason did not even smile, but looked exceedingly grave.

"Strange! strange!" he muttered, scratching his head.

"Has anything like this ever occurred in your house before?" asked Dick.

"Yes. Each time an officer of the law has come here to investigate the case, and has gone to sleep, he has awakened to find his clothing gone. Then we have searched the house, high and low, and found no clew to the mystery. It is something awful, this strain upon my nervous system!"

"I would like to inquire why you did not notify me of this *penchant* of your ghost?" the detective curtly returned.

"Because I had put a new lock on the door, and thought I had made all safe. But, Mr. Bristol, I shall bear every cent of your loss; you shall be paid in full. I deeply regret not warning you, but I trusted to the new lock."

"If the door is secure, my property went through some hole in the wall. I'll look for one."

"I've looked in vain, in the past, but we will try again."

They did so, but found no explanation of the mystery.

"Well, what am I to do for garments?" Dick then asked.

"Oh! I can fix you out, all right, I guess. I've a suit that a relative left here, last year, and I think it will just about fit you."

"All right! I don't care if it was made for a giant; I'll put it on."

They adjourned to another room, where Dick was soon dressed in a presentable manner.

"Now, come to my room," directed Gleason. "It is approaching the hour for it to appear!"

So to Gleason's room they went.

"Now," continued Gleason, "I have cleared out my wardrobe, yonder. One of you can station himself in that. Probably it would answer you best, Mr. Bristol. You can leave the door partly ajar, and, immediately the clock strikes twelve, you will see it! Now, let me see! What shall we do with the boy?"

And Mr. Gleason reflected.

"Never mind me!" replied Billy. "I'll take up my position ter suit myself, where I kin see widout bein' seen."

"And where is that?"

"Under de bunk!"

And, with that, the young Arab put the plan into execution by crawling in under the bed, greatly to the detective's amusement.

After Dick and Billy had assumed their respective positions, Mr. Gleason went to his bed, covered himself up, and all was silence—silence most dismal.

"I'm half-ashamed of this business," the detective thought, "and, when it is settled, I think I will draw the line at ghosts in my detective work. But—give the ghost its due—this affair may end in my becoming a believer!"

Under the bed, Billy Bucket was also meditating.

"Smotherin' smoke! I wish I was back in New York! I don't like this job; darned ef I do! I wished the old man hadn't give Dick any clothes, an' the chances are that the spook wouldn't come around."

It was an anxious vigil for all

Twelve o'clock!

Bristol instinctively turned his eyes toward the clock as it told the hour, but, he almost immediately became conscious of something more. There was a change in the room, and something was visible which was lighter and whiter than the rays of the faintly burning gas.

The ghost was there!

Yes; coming from some place unknown, and, having entered in some manner beyond surmise, the haunting shadow of James Gleason's life was visible even to the doubting vision of Deadwood Dick.

It was clad in spotless white, and, certainly, did not appear like a creature of earth. No sound was to be heard as it moved, and its grace of carriage was only equaled by a certain vagueness which hung around it, as it were, like an unsubstantial mantle. Its beautifully-formed face was of a deathlike pallor, which was in striking contrast to its wonderful eyes.

To define the expression of those eyes would be almost impossible.

The hair was like a sheen of gold, reaching be-

low the waist, and reminding one of sunny ripples on placid water.

The hands were slender, and the figure was wholly symmetrical.

Dick was watching; so was Billy, from the furthest corner of the bed, while Mr. Gleason was sitting upright, white as death.

The apparition gazed only in one direction; it approached Mr. Gleason's bedside with a slow, gliding movement.

"Good God!" groaned the stock-broker, in terror.

Dick and Billy gazed in silence not unmixed with awe.

Then from the ghost's white lips came coherent words, slowly and sepulchraly uttered:

"Four, eleven, forty-four!"

James Gleason dropped back prone upon the bed, while the ghost glided away.

Quickly the detective flung open the wardrobe door and sprung out, but, the ghost had gone—where, none there could tell! It had seemed to fade away like a vanishing shadow!

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERY INCREASES.

"WELL, this is my-stery with a vengeance!"

Thus admitted Deadwood Dick when, after a thorough search, he and his companions had failed to find the specter or any avenue through which she might have escaped.

"I reckon you're satisfied?" replied Mr. Gleason, with an air of despondency.

"Yes, to a certain extent."

"Well, what do you make of it?"

"Let me question you before I answer. Were you ever married?"

"No, never. If I had been I would have been better off to-day, both in spirits and in money matters."

"Were you ever engaged?"

"Yes."

"To whom? if I may ask."

"Mabel Madden."

"Do you know where she lives, now?"

"No. That she is in the city I am positive, but where, I cannot tell exactly. Somewhere, I think, on Seneca street, not far from Exchange."

"Does the ghost bear any resemblance to this Mabel Madden?"

"Not in the least."

Just then there was a knock at the outside door, audible even to them. Presently a servant appeared.

"Who is it?" Mr. Gleason demanded.

"Don't know, sir; I didn't see."

"Confound you! why didn't you open the door?"

"'Fraid it is de ghost!"

"I'll open it," volunteered Dick, glancing at the clock, "but it strikes me this is a strange hour for callers."

"Ditto!" added Billy "and here I go under de bed!"

And he went without delay.

Dick hastened to the front door and opened it. But no one was to be seen on the outside.

The night was one of utter blackness, so thinking it possible he might not be able to see the late applicant for admission, Bristol called out:

"Who's there?"

The answer was one that would have made the hair of a superstitious man incline to stand on end. In a sepulchral voice, it came.

"Four, eleven, forty-four!"

Thoroughly aroused, Dick rushed outside but nothing was there! He made a thorough search, but was compelled to return without having accomplished anything.

"Well, who was it?" demanded Mr. Gleason.

"A friend of yours," Dick replied, grimly.

"A friend of mine, at this time of night? What name?"

"Four, eleven, forty-four!"

Gleason groaned aloud.

"Good God! Will that thing never cease to haunt me? Why didn't you fire at it?"

"Didn't see any thing to fire at."

"Oh! Lord!" cried Billy, from under the bed.

"Can you pray, Dick?"

"Pray! Why should I pray?"

"'Cause we're gone up de spout. Oh! don't I wish I was back in New York!"

"Oh! the ghost won't bite you, Billy; they don't as a rule, crawl under the bed. If you see this particular one there, let me know, and I will come to your rescue. I reckon our ghost won't be heard from again, to-night. Think so, Mr. Gleason?"

"The Lord forbid, Mr. Bristol! This matter is so preying upon my mind that I fear I shall become insane. Do you wonder at it? Do you think a man can stand this thing, night after

night, week after week, and month after month, without having his nerves shattered? I sometimes feel, in the lonely hours of the night, that I shall go stark, raving mad. Help yourself to the brandy there on the side-board, Bristol; but, for heaven's sake, don't desert me in this hour of dire distress. I'm worth a good deal of money, in one way and another, and should I drop off, it's all yours!"

The detective took this statement with a grain of allowance.

"Where do I come in?"

This, as may be supposed, came from under the bed, where Billy Bucket was still inclined to linger.

"You came in at the front door, and go out at the back!" Dick retorted.

"Not the boy shall be provided for," Gleason promised. "I'm not, nor ever was, a stingy man; and, if I can have this horror dissolved, or explained, I will make you both rich."

Just then, Deadwood Dick uttered a sudden exclamation:

"Look here! What does *this* mean?"

This brought Mr. Gleason up in bed.

"What is it?" he gasped.

There had, prior to this, been a small table, standing in the center of the room.

Now it was across the floor, against the side of the wainscoting.

"What's the matter?" demanded Gleason.

"Did you see it again?"

"No; but there may be something wrong. There's a screw loose somewhere. Did you touch this table while I was out of the room?"

"Certainly not!"

And Mr. Gleason grew white.

"And you, Billy? Did you remove it?"

"Not much. Ef you'd 'a' gi'n me the house, you would not have got me out of this 'ere hidin'-place!"

The detective looked perplexed.

"Well," he exclaimed, "by the great Scott, here is a mystery. When I went to the door, that stand was in the center of the room; I'll swear to it!"

"Are you perfectly sure?" asked Gleason.

"Positive!"

"Well, it is the strangest thing I ever heard of!"

Billy now crawled from under the bed, far enough to let his head protrude.

"Am she here, Dick?"

"No, not at present; you can come out of cover."

So Billy emerged from his covert with a broad grin on his face.

"Don't lose any sleep out o' *this* mystery," he directed. "I was the ghost that moved that aire table, while Gleason was lookin' down ter hear from you."

Just then there came a tap upon the window that caused new excitement. Dick ran to that point, and threw up the lower sash, when again that mournful—"Four, eleven, forty-four!"

Dick's revolver was out in an instant but the only response was a mocking, eldritch scream of laughter that echoed through the room!

"Satisfied, now, eh?" inquired Mr. Gleason.

"I'm more than that! But I'll figure out this business before I abandon the job, or I'll forfeit ten thousand dollars of a sum of money I've got laid away. Now tell me what is the meaning of this 'Four, eleven, forty-four' chant, which the ghost utters so mournfully?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"Don't it connect with anything in your past life?"

"It does not!" Gleason positively declared.

"Did you—are you *sure* you never played policy?"

"Of course I am sure," responded Gleason.

"You never gambled with those 'coon' numbers?"

"No; not that I remember. I have often heard of the superstition of the colored race in regard to them, but, as I never frequented the resorts patronized by this class of people, I cannot imagine how, or why, the number should follow me so persistently."

The detective had watched closely while Gleason spoke, but the latter's manner and expression were alike those of a man who had nothing to conceal.

"But," replied Dick, "if the numbers have no particular meaning to you, why should your ghost utter them?"

"I only wish I could tell you, but I cannot."

"She's hungry fur a game o' policy," suggested Billy, "an' he's the 'coon' she has picked out."

"Be silent!" Bristol ordered; but Billy lost

his levity as the ghost's knuckles sent out another alarm.

This time, the rap appeared to be directly beneath Dick's chair, and he made a leap as if impregnated with a severe charge of electricity.

"The devil certainly has management of this house!" he muttered.

Then seeing nothing, he turned to Gleason with the inquiry:

"Did you hear it?"

"Did I? Have I not heard it before? It comes from all parts of the house, from cellar to garret. Sometimes it is in my room; at others, battering the sides of the house, or the doors, or the windows. Again, it is heard in the barn, where I keep my horses and conveyances. In the last six months I have been obliged to employ no less than ten different stablemen, to fill vacancies made by this infernal thing, be it woman or devil!"

"Scared away, I suppose?"

"Yes. Immediately the ghost appears before them, they come to me, hand in their resignation, draw their pay and quit!"

"Dick, let's us hand in ours!" suggested Billy.

"Oh! no, not yet," replied Dick. "We are game enough, I hope, to keep our promise. There is something in this case that will have to be investigated, now that I have come all the way here from New York. If that ghost appears to my vision again, I'll 'lay' it or my name isn't Bristol."

And, annoyed at his defeat in this preliminary skirmish with the apparition, Dick retired to his room, to remain undisturbed for the rest of the night.

CHAPTER V. ENNIS ON DUTY.

DICK and Billy left Mr. Gleason about nine in the morning.

The detective had now insisted on having his headquarters at a hotel, and he proceeded to make arrangements at once.

Dick then sent Billy to the depot, to look after their baggage, while he spent some time in wandering about town, his eyes drinking in what was to be seen, and his mind likewise busy, as regarded the haunted man and the haunted house.

"It's a mystery," he mused, "that bids fair to outdo anything on my record. I wonder—"

"Hello! mine frient; how you vas?"

Looking around, Dick beheld the full-moon face of Mr. D. Ennis.

"Oh! I'm alive yet," Dick replied, smilingly.

"Did you see dot ghostess?"

"Yes, I did, or something of a very ghostly order."

"Vot you t'ink it, hey? You no like him, hey?"

"Well, I should judge it was a *her*, instead of a him, from general appearances. However the case may be, if I get my eye on the article again, there will be work for an undertaker!"

"Undertakers don't vas bury ghosts, my frient."

"Well, then I will do the job, myself. I don't believe in spirits materialized, and I'll penetrate this mystery, or 'sell out my profession.'"

"Den you vil sell out."

"I don't think so. I've an idea it won't be long before I shall be able to reveal the whole thing. Are you busy, to-day, Mr. Ennis?"

"No. I haf noddings to do."

"Then I want your services."

Mr. D. Ennis brightened up, immediately.

"Vot for you want me?" he demanded.

"Well, to find a woman. Whether she is young or old I have neglected to inquire, but my impression is that she is not over thirty-five."

"Vot vas her name, you don'd know?"

"Mabel Madden."

Mr. Ennis whistled softly.

"Vot you want mit *her*?" he inquired, with curiosity.

"That don't matter," Dick replied. "I want to locate her. Do you know where she can be found?"

"Vell," said Herr Ennis, "der vas two of 'em, py dot name. Vot one off dem do you want?"

This was a question Dick was hardly prepared to answer.

"Describe the two women!" he requested. "How old are they? what is their personal appearance? and where do they live?"

"Vell, I don'd was much on dose descriptions mit my tongue, but I can see a lot. Von of dese womans is about forty years olt, while de odder von—vell, she am not so olt. Von of dem

haf plack hair, v'ile the odder von she haf yellow hair, like dot sunshine."

"That's the one I want. Where does *she* live?"

"Up on Seneca street."

"Do you know what business she is engaged in?"

Herr Ennis scratched his bushy head.

"Vell," he said, "I gif dot up. Der vas a sign on der door v'ot says: 'Mabel Madden, Modes!' and noddings more. If you vill tell me vot 'modes' means, I vill set up dem drinks, so help me gracious!"

"Oh, I see," responded Dick. "She is a *modiste*—a dressmaker. Now, where does the other one live?"

Herr Ennis reflected a moment.

"On North Division street, I t'ink, but I forget me dot number. What is dot number, now? Let me t'ink!"

But, although Ennis applied his thoughts vigorously to the matter, he failed to remember the location.

"Dot number I forgot. But I t'ink I can find dot house, all de same."

"Well, then come along. Show me it, and that of the other Mabel Madden, and I will pay you for your time."

So they set forth on their tour of investigation.

First they went to North Division street, and presently Herr Ennis succeeded in locating the home of Mabel Madden No. 1.

"Dot's where dot plack-haired von lives," he said, "or at least she did lif here."

"Very well. Now show the way to the residence of the other."

They set forth for Seneca street.

"Vot you t'ink?—dot those wimmens haf a somet'ings to do mit dot ghost business?"

"Well, I don't know. If they have, I'll soon find out. I've got an idea that the matter is worth investigating!"

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT TO MISS MADDEN.

ARRIVED at Seneca street in the neighborhood of Exchange, Herr Ennis soon pointed out the residence of Miss Madden, No. 2.

It was rather a shabby-looking frame cottage, and attached to the door-jamb was a neat little tin sign which bore the inscription to which Ennis had referred.

"Dot vas der place," observed the German.

"Now, vot more you want mit me?"

"Nothing, until I have a chat with this woman. But, wait around the neighborhood, in case I should want you."

"I vil wait ofer at dot beer saloon, across de street."

"All right. I won't be gone long."

So Ennis made a bee-line for the saloon, while Dick went and rung Miss Madden's bell.

A comely-looking young lady, of not more than four-and-twenty years opened the door.

"Is Miss Madden in?" Dick asked.

"Yes, sir. Walk in!"

Dick entered, and was shown into a neat little parlor, where every thing was snug and well arranged.

"Wait here!" directed the young woman. "I will summon Miss Mabel. Who shall I say wishes to see her?"

"Mr. Bristol."

"Very well."

Then she left the room.

"I wonder how much I shall learn here?" Dick mused. "I dare say it won't be much."

Miss Madden soon appeared.

She was a pale, ethereal-looking creature, but, nevertheless, rather pretty.

Moreover, she was, as well as Dick could remember, an exact counterpart of the apparition, ghost, or whatever it was, that he had seen at the house of Mr. Gleason!

She was clad in spotless white—a flowing wrapper with lace trimmings; and wore some very elegant jewelry.

"Did you wish to see me, sir?" she asked, politely.

"Yes, miss. I have a little question to ask you. Did you ever know Mr. James Gleason?" She heard the question with perfect composure.

"Yes, I did!" she steadily returned.

"Were you engaged to be married to him?"

"I was; but we had a quarrel and that settled matters. Since then we have been strangers."

"Do you mind telling me what your quarrel occurred about?" Dick asked, as delicately as possible.

"I do not, as a rule, impart my private affairs to utter strangers."

"When did you see Mr. Gleason last?"

"It is some days since. I believe the last time I saw him was on Franklin street, near the post-office. We simply passed each other by, without speaking."

"Were you not in Mr. Gleason's house last night, Miss Madden?" inquired Dick, bluntly. She gave him an indignant look.

"Certainly not! Why should I be in the house of that man? Your question is most ungentlemanly!"

"Can't help that, miss; I saw you there!"

"You lie! Get out of my house!" she cried, angrily.

"Not yet, my dear lady," responded Dick, decidedly. "I saw you there," he repeated, "and I'll swear to it. Now, come; own up. You're playing the ghost racket on Mr. Gleason!"

"No, I am not. Do I look like a ghost?"

"Well, yes; at least, you resemble the one who looked in upon us last night. In fact, you are the very counterpart of her!"

This seemed to nettle Miss Madden even more.

"You are mistaken, sir!" she asserted, warmly. "I was not out of my house after dark."

"Miss Madden, are you aware what I am?"

"Yes. You are evidently a detective, but you have come to the wrong place to pursue your vocation, sir. You will find out nothing here, as there is nothing to be found out. I know nothing of Mr. Gleason's house, nor do I want to. I have never done him an injustice, although he did me one."

"In what respect?"

"That I must decline to state. Suffice to say, it was an injustice."

"Very well; I will bid you good-day. It is evident that we don't understand one another."

Dick took leave, and at the German saloon met Herr Ennis.

"Vel, v'ot you make out?" inquired the eccentric Teuton.

"I think I have found the ghost!"

"Vos it dot Seneca street woman?"

"I am pretty positive of it!" Dick replied.

"Vel, v'ot you goin' to do about it?"

"I'm not prepared to say, just now. I've no positive evidence against her, more than that I am sure she is the one who personates the ghost. I want to be sure I'm all right; then I'll go ahead, with a vengeance. I want you to keep a close watch on that house. If Mabel Madden leaves it, you are to shadow her. Do you think you can do that?"

"In course I can. Dot is peezness!"

"All right. I will go and see Mr. Gleason, and the other Miss Madden, I will call around here before night and get your report. Mind you, now, keep a close watch!"

"You bet I vill! If dot womans leaves dot house, I am after her, an' don't you forget it!"

So Dick set forth in a perplexed mood, and directed his route toward Gleason's house.

On the way up Main street he encountered Billy Bucket, who had just finished his errand.

"Well, Billy, any news?" Bristol inquired.

"Yes. The old chap wants ter see ye, mighty bad!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE LETTER.

DICK and Billy at once proceeded to Gleason's residence and found him in a very perturbed state of mind.

"Well, Mr. Gleason, what is it? Have you seen the ghost again?" demanded the detective.

"No; but I have found something in connection with the mystery. Read this."

He then handed Dick a letter.

It was in a woman's hand, and a very good style of chirography it was, too.

It was written on perfumed paper, and ran as follows:

"MR. JAMES GLEASON:—Four, eleven, forty-four! Fifty-nine days you have yet to live. You had better begin to make your final preparations, buy your outfit, engage your undertaker, and provide yourself with a burial-lot, if you have not one, already!"

There was no signature, but, at the end of the message, was a rudely-drawn skull and crossbones.

"When did you get this?" Dick inquired.

"Less than an hour ago."

"By whom?—as I see there is no post-mark on the envelope."

"It was brought to me by a telegraph messenger, from the main office."

"Do you remember his number?"

"I think I do. It was sixteen, if my memory serves me right. He was a red-headed boy, about twelve years of age."

"Well, I'll go and hunt up this 16. Come, Billy!" and forthwith the two set out for the telegraph-office, which they were not long in finding.

"I want to see Number 16," Dick explained to one of the operatives. "Call him for me, please!"

Sixteen presently appeared, and proved to be a bright-looking lad.

The chief clerk directed him to Dick.

"Want me, sir?"

"You took a letter, to-day, to Mr. James Gleason?"

"Yes, sir."

"From whom did you receive it?"

"From the chief clerk, sir."

"Did you see who left it with the chief clerk?"

"Yes, sir. It was a nigger boy!"

"Have you ever seen him before? Do you know where he is employed?"

"No, sir, I do not. I've seen him before, but I don't know where he works."

Here the trail practically ended again, so, he and Billy took their departure.

"Well, Dick, what next?" Billy asked. "I reckon this job will cost us more time than der money will be worth, eh?"

"Maybe it will, but, my boy, the prospects are fair that we'll lay that ghost before a week passes. We will now proceed to Seneca street, and see what Ennis has to report."

"You hain't got that Dutchman on the string, too?"

"You'd better be more respectful to Mr. Ennis, Billy, or you may get in a hole. If he is tantalized by your remarks, again, he may break your back for you."

"Bah! That Dutchy break my back? Sauerkraut and beer never yet kitched me a-sleepin'!" and Billy looked his disgust.

When they arrived at the beer-saloon on Seneca street, they found Herr Ennis gazing methodically out of the glass door, his attention directed toward the house of Miss Mabel Madden.

"Well, Ennis, what is it?" Dick inquired on entering. "Have you discovered anything?"

"Vel, I don't know. I watch dot house, but no womans come out yet. I tink you makes a mistakes apoudt dot lady, hey?"

"Possibly. Have you seen a negro boy, or man, about the premises, since you have been here?"

"Yes. Von of dem just entered der house, an hour ago. I tink vot he vork there."

The trail was hot again. It was now as plain as day that he had discovered the tormentor of the haunted man.

But, how was he to prove it clearly enough to warrant the arrest of Miss Madden?

"Well," he continued, after some minutes of deliberation, "you remain here, Ennis, until two o'clock in the morning, and if you see no woman leave the house, go home and go to bed. If you do see a woman leave the house, follow her!"

"I vil, py cratious! I vil follow her vrom here to t'e banks of de Rhine!"

The German's zeal was very agreeable to the detective, who, as he turned away, felt that he was leaving a faithful ally to continue work in that quarter.

They went at once to the house of the Division street Mabel Madden, for Dick's curiosity in the matter was now at a white heat. Like a sleuth-bound on the field he was growing more eager as he neared his game.

To visit Miss Madden, Number Two, was now the proper thing to do. Dick directed Billy to remain outside, while he had the interview.

Then he gave the door-bell a pull, and, it not being answered the first time, followed it up with a second ring of considerable vigor.

The woman who answered the summons was not only ugly of aspect, but, evidently the same in the way of temperament.

"What d'ye want?" she demanded, her uncombed locks standing in confusion. "Why do you come and startle a lady out of an afternoon's rest?"

Her manner was even more venomous than her words, and her eyes darted so much hostility at him that Dick was not reluctant to "go for" her at once.

"As a detective employed by the United States, it is in my power to enter your house and demand any information I may need. Are you inclined to give it amicably, or must I exercise my authority?"

He had not miscalculated the effect that these words would have. The belligerent woman became meek at once, as well as startled. Dick, however, thought it the alarm of a naturally timid person, rather than that of a criminal.

She made answer in a very subdued manner: "If I can give you any information, sir, you are welcome to walk in. But, first, I must see your authority."

Dick exposed his badge, which immediately had effect.

"Come right in," she added. "I don't know what you are after, but you will find very little here to reward you, I am afraid."

The detective was conducted to a pleasant parlor.

"Is this Miss Mabel Madden?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Any relative of the other lady of the same name?"

"No. I was not even aware there was another Miss Madden."

"There is another, and she is young and quite pretty. But that is not to the point. Do you know James Gleason?"

"I have heard of him, but I have never seen him, to know him. I believe, however, he is a retired speculator, from what I've heard."

"Are you quite sure you have no personal acquaintance with him?"

"I am positive," responded the woman. "I have no male associates, nor do I want any. Men are horrid creatures!"

This was said with so much vim that Dick concluded it was inadvisable to continue investigation any further on that trail.

So, presently, he left Miss Spinster Madden, joined Billy at the corner, and, in half an hour, they were once more in the presence of Mr. Gleason.

"Well, what luck now?" the haunted man asked.

"Nothing definite, but to-night may pan out better."

CHAPTER VIII.

A GAME OF CARDS.

NIGHT came on apace, and, with it, a severe storm. The lightning flashed and the thunder crashed in a way not calculated to inspire a person with courage, especially in a haunted house.

Mr. Gleason was very nervous, and, at every flash and boom he started with terror.

Dick noticed this, and, to alleviate the gentleman's suffering suggested a game of cards, to which Gleason at once assented.

"It will drive off the horrors!" he replied, gloomily. "This is going to be a tough night on me."

"Oh! take courage. It would dampen the ardor of any ghost to come around such a night as this," Dick asserted, reassuringly.

"Don't you believe it! The weather has no effect on it—none, whatever!"

"Well, we will see."

So they began with the cards.

After they had played a few games Mr. Gleason's spirits began to rise, and he became quite jovial.

"Maybe it won't appear," he said, cheerfully.

"But it will," declared Billy Bucket. "Thet aire ghost is close here, now!"

"What makes you think that?"

"Feel it in my bones, boss."

"Oh! your bones are 'rattled!'"

The game went on, and Gleason ordered a bottle of wine.

"We may as well build up our courage," he said.

The wine was old and very pure—very good building material, indeed, and calculated to brace up one's spirits.

Midnight, with all its gruesome somberness, rapidly advanced, and, with its approach, the nerves of the trio became more unsteady.

Billy moved near a sofa, so as to be able to crawl under it in case Madam Specter should appear. Dick drew his revolver, and laid it on the table with the observation:

"If the visitor comes to-night, she will wish she had stayed where she came from!"

"I don't believe a spirit can be shot," Gleason declared, dubiously. "It don't stand to reason."

"We will see about that. I am of the impression if I can get a bead on this gentle gazelle, again, I can make her 'holler.'"

"If you do, you know my promise. I'll make you a wealthy man!"

"Oh! as far as that goes, I have little concern. I am curious, however, Mr. Gleason, to know the exact cause of the breaking off of your engagement with Miss Mabel Madden."

Mr. Gleason looked glum.

"Well, I cannot tell you. I would if I could, but I cannot."

"Dare not, maybe?" Dick suggested, bluntly.

"Well, no, not exactly that; I cannot."

"There's some secret between you?"

"There may be, but it cannot bear any relation to this ghost business. It is impossible!"

Dick did not press the inquiry, but kept up a constant thinking.

There was surely some important secret between Gleason and Mabel Madden. Was there murder connected with the matter, or was it some piece of crookedness in business, or was it some personal wrong or indignity?

The games ended shortly before twelve o'clock, both players being tired of the amusement, and under the belief that more serious work was to follow.

"Purty near time for de ghost to come," muttered Billy. "Guess I'll take a sneak under de sofia!"

And under that article of furniture he crept. "I wouldn't mind doing that, too," admitted Gleason, "if I was not so big. Anything to escape that visitant."

"Which simply means—anything to escape Mabel Madden!" averred the detective.

"Mabel Madden? What under the sun has she to do with the ghost?"

"Everything to do with it! I'll swear to that! Now, look here, Mr. Gleason! There's a mystery between you two people, and you may as well explain it. What crime have you ever committed, to cause this woman to dog you, or what injustice have you done her?"

"None, whatever!"

"I know better. Excuse me if I seem rude, but I am positive that you are not telling the truth."

Mr. Gleason arose indignantly, but immediately sat down again, for there came a rap upon the door. They did not hurry to answer it.

"Der ghost!" whispered Billy. "I told yer so. I knew et was near. Here's luck! I'll look on while you fellers aire wrastlin' wid de animal. Don't ketch me out o' cover ag'in, ter-nite!"

"Mr. Gleason, do not be alarmed," Dick directed, for his employer had turned deathly pale; "it's not the ghost, I'll vouch," and he entered the hall and flung open the outer door.

Instead of the ghost, it was the Teuton Detective, Herr Ennis.

"Goot-evening, Bristles," the visitor saluted, in a quiet way. "How you vas, and all der rest of you?"

"All alive. How are you, Mr. Ennis?"

"Oh! I vas peautifool. How is dot spooks? Seen 'em, yet? Vas she appeared?"

"No; but we are expecting the specter every minute. I presume you have something to report?"

"Yes, I have. I haf soomet'ing to dells you, else I shouldn't be here. V'at you t'ink? Shust after you left me, I met a friendt of mine on de sidevalk, shust oudside dot saloon. While I vas talking mit dot friendt, dis Miss Mabel Madden she comes up to me, and says: 'V'at you vatch around dis neighborhood for?'"

"I got mad an' I told her to go to der tuyfel."

"Well, what next?"

"Vel, den she got on top of her ear, and marched off. I follered her, shust like dot dog v'at dey call de sleuth-hound; but she somehow got out of my vay, and I could find her no more. But, she comes oud this way, and I vil bet a five dollars vot she is de ghost!"

"Very likely. Come into the parlor, Mr. Ennis."

The foregoing conversation had occurred in the hall.

When they entered the room Gleason arose and greeted the German cordially.

"Ennis, I am most glad to see you."

"Der same mit you, sir."

"Have you any good news?"

"Vel, not very good. Bristles can, perhaps, dells you better as I. I have already oxbained to him all v'at I knows apout dose t'ings concerning dot ghost!"

Dick then made known the result of Herr Ennis's investigation.

"You think, then, that this Madden woman came to this neighborhood?" asked Gleason, with great anxiety.

"I vos sure of it."

"At what time did you see her last?"

"Yust apoud dark. She wandered about Main street, and then she comes to Niagara street; and I follows her till she dodge me. Den, I hunt around vor her, but id is no use."

"Oh! you are no good!" cried Billy Bucket, from under the sofa. "Your name is Dennis! I could do better than that myself!"

Ennis glared around him, in a rage.

"Ver' is dot young scamps? I vill schoost preak his head for him!"

"Not much you won't, Dutchy! That head is cabbage proof. When a feller can survive a brick house fallin' on his head, I guess there is no sauer-krauter kin break it."

The irate Herr Ennis evidently meant fight, but—

The ghost was in their midst.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GHOST AGAIN.

It came as suddenly and mysteriously as usual. One moment the watching men were sure that they were alone in the room; the next, James Gleason recoiled with a gasp.

The ghost stood by his side.

Its lips moved, and upon his ears fell that dreaded utterance:

"Four, eleven, forty-four!"

Deadwood Dick sprung to his feet, but, Ennis bounced directly in his way. The next moment the ghost was gone—where, no one could tell.

It left Gleason quaking with terror, while the German was as white as the mysterious phantom, itself.

Billy Bucket could not be seen, but he was to be heard from, nevertheless.

"Hey, Dutchy, v'ot you t'ink apoud dot?" came in from under the sofa, with surprising cheerfulness.

"Himmel!" was all Ennis could say, for the time being. Later, he added: "Py gracious! I dinks I vil go home. I like not dot peezness!"

"Why didn't you fire at it, Bristol?" asked Gleason.

"Give it up. I admit that I was struck silly as it was. I will give you a tip on one thing!"

"What is that?"

"That ghost is human!"

"How do you know that?"

"Because I smelt her breath! She had been eating onions!"

This elicited a snort from under the sofa. Here was a chance to get in a word.

"Dick!" cried Billy.

"Well, what is it?"

"Wasn't it Dutchy's breath you smelled?"

"Py gracious!" cried the German, rallying, "shust we wait until I get me dot poy, und you shall see me make anodders ghost, don't it?"

"Wait till you get de boy," replied Billy, "and then you kin shout."

Herr Ennis soon departed; one glimpse at the ghost was quite sufficient for him.

After he had gone, Dick observed:

"Well, Mr. Gleason, I've a notion we have seen the last of the ghost for to-night."

"I fear not. It will come again. It did not utter that infernal 'four, eleven, forty-four,' and will not leave until that is said. It never fails on that!"

An hour passed, but no ghost appeared.

"I reckon we might as well go to the hotel," Dick then decided.

"For mercy's sake, no!"

"But there's no use of our remaining here longer."

"There is; I dare not remain alone."

"Why not?"

"On account of that letter."

"The letter won't hurt you."

"No; but I am afraid of being murdered. I wouldn't stay alone in this house again, for a fortune."

"Oh! pshaw! You've no nerve, but I'll stay."

Billy enlivened the occasion with several songs. He had a good voice, and, like most street gamins, "caught on" to every new song that came out at any of the theaters.

This served somewhat to dispel Mr. Gleason's gloom, and also kept Dick awake, tired and sleepy as he was.

About three o'clock Gleason lay down upon the sofa and went to sleep.

"Now, Billy, let's investigate the pantry, and see if we can't scare up something to eat," Dick suggested. "I am as hungry as a wolf."

"Me, too, you bet!"

So they searched until they discovered the pantry, and there found an abundance of cold meats and wine. Upon these they made an agreeable lunch.

Mr. Gleason evidently was a good liver, if he was a haunted man.

"This am a snap," commented Billy. "Feller kin afford to put up with ghosts fer sake of a feed like this."

"Well, yes. But, if Gleason should catch us devouring his viands, it might not beso interesting. We have his permission, but he wasn't on to our appetites."

"No fear. He's sound asleep, and won't wake up till mornin'."

So they finished their repast, making a considerable deficit in the Gleason larder.

They had only just finished when they heard a loud yell, as if some one were in pain. It came from the parlor.

"Something's gone wrong!" muttered Dick,

and drawing a revolver, he hastened to the rescue.

Billy followed, armed with a heavy iron poker, which he had discovered in a corner of the pantry.

They reached the parlor to find Gleason groaning and gasping like a dying man on the sofa.

"What's the matter? Are you taken ill?" Dick demanded.

"I've been stabbed!" moaned the ex-broker, and he exposed his shirt-front, which was covered with blood!

Dick quickly drew a knife and cut away the bosom, and found that it was only too true.

Mr. Gleason had been stabbed in the breast. But the location of the wound did not make it necessarily fatal.

"Who did this?" Dick asked, peremptorily.

"I don't know," groaned the stricken man. "I felt the pain and quickly awoke, but saw no one."

At this juncture Billy uttered a veritable howl.

"Look! look!" he cried. "Der writing on the wall!"

Mr. Gleason's room was papered in white satin paper of gloss finish. On the opposite side from the sofa, written in crimson on the wall, were these now-ominous words:

"FOUR, ELEVEN, FORTY-FOUR."

Deadwood Dick gazed in dumfounded silence at the strange inscription. It was a fresh proof of the audacity of the intruder, ghost or human being, which angered him.

"Doomed!—doomed!" Gleason gasped, in horror.

"Nonsense!" Bristol retorted. "Will you let yourself be influenced by this transparent humbug! Be a man! Here, Billy, go and get some water from the kitchen. We must bind up this wound, and stop the flow of blood."

"Gimme your revolver! Don't ketch me out in der kitchen 'thout I'm armed. Oh! no!" asseverated Billy.

Dick loaned him one of his revolvers, and the gamins hastened to fill the order.

He soon returned with the water.

Dick proceeded to do his work with deft skill. He succeeded in stopping the flow of blood, and then bound up the wound. After that he administered a narcotic, which, by the old gentleman's direction, he found upon the mantel.

Gleason presently dozed off, and that ended the results of the night.

The ghost did not again appear, and every effort of the detective and his ally failed to throw light upon the strange affair.

Gleason awoke at seven, feeling much stronger and quite cheerful, and after, by Dick's directions to the servant, he had been served with a cup of beef-tea, he announced that his pain was less, and that he felt quite comfortable.

"Did you see anything more of it?" he asked.

"No. It did not come back, if you refer to the ghost. I shall try to investigate it, to-day. But, Mr. Gleason, what's the secret between you and Mabel Madden? If I do not have this, I leave for New York, at 10:30!"

"You still cling to the belief that it is she?"

"No doubt about it. I have seen the woman, and I have seen her perfect counterpart in what you claim to be a ghost. She and the ghost are one. Now, you told me that Mabel Madden did not resemble the ghost, as you choose to term it. You deliberately deceived me. But, as I have said, before I go further with the case I shall have to demand a strictly truthful statement of matters, or else my services can be replaced by some one else's."

"Wait; don't go," the man pleaded. "Let me think over the thing. You shall lose nothing by your visit to Buffalo, even if my lips do remain sealed. I must have time to consider."

"Well, be lively about it. I'm getting somewhat out of patience!"

"So am I," put in Billy Bucket. "We want to hear der hull bizness!"

CHAPTER X.

MISS MADDEN'S VERSION.

"WELL," explained Gleason, after mature reflection, "it was two years ago that I first met Mabel Madden."

Here he paused in deep reflection.

"The young one who lives on Seneca street?" questioned Dick.

"Yes. I think it was at a picnic somewhere in the province of Ontario—oh! I know, now! I had gone over to Niagara City on a business errand, and was there introduced to her. She was a charming young woman, and, although I

am pretty well along in years, I became rather enamored of her. We had several suppers together, and became fast friends almost before we knew it. One day, when we were out driving, she made a most singular proposal."

"What was it?"

"Well, at the time, I carried the largest stock of furs in the city, principally seal goods. This was a side business of mine. She suggested, that we go into the smuggling business. She would buy the goods in Canada and have them sent across the border, and would share in this lessening of the expense and enlarging the profits!"

"You consented, I suppose, to the proposition?"

"Yes; I must confess I did. I have regretted it ever since; and if you, as a gentleman and likewise a bloodhound of the law, won't give away this confidence of a man who has suffered the torture of the damned, I shall feel very grateful."

"Very well," replied Dick. "Go ahead with the explanation. What occurred afterward? Did she betray you?"

"She tried. After I would no longer cling to the business, she used every device to get me into trouble. Let her go ahead, if it be she who is trying to play the ghost racket on me. I will make it the dearest job she ever tried!"

"I don't know about that. If you were to tackle her, and have been equally guilty, you are just as likely to get worsted, as otherwise."

"Why should I? I have reformed, and, at the beginning, she was the tempter."

"Can you prove it?"

"Perhaps not, but I could make matters warm for her."

"Well, will you acknowledge that the woman who appears to your vision is this Madden woman?" the detective asked.

"Well, yes, she resembles her somewhat; but, when I knew her, she was not so pale."

"I think she is the apparition."

"But, how does she gain entrance to my house? She has no key, and my servant locks the doors."

The ex-broker was sure that his servants were beyond being bribed, and how Miss Madden—if, indeed, the ghost was she—could gain entrance to the house was almost as strange as her antics when once there.

About noon, Dick and Billy took leave of the old gentleman and went for a stroll to see the city.

Gleason's wound was doing well, and there was no danger in his remaining in charge of his man servant. The injury was not such as to require medical aid.

So Dick and Billy wandered down to the great river and along its course down to the railway bridge.

When they arrived at the bridge which reaches to the Canada side, they met with a surprise in the shape of Miss Mabel Madden.

She gave a startled glance, and then, instead of fleeing, approached the detective.

"Well, sir, have you seen the ghost again?"

"No. I have seen *you*, however?" Dick retorted.

"Where?"

"In Mr. James Gleason's house, exactly at the hour of twelve."

"No, you didn't! I was in my own bed at that hour, and I can prove it by my servant."

"Your servant be blowed! I saw you, with my own eyes."

"I guess you must have borrowed a pair of false ones, for I surely was at home."

"Yes, if you consider Gleason's your home!"

"Not much, I don't! I'd die, if in his presence!"

"Yet you didn't use to be so vicious, when you were smuggling furs!" Dick retorted. "It's a wonder you didn't turn around and stab Mr. Gleason before last night."

This was a shot that went home with a vengeance.

Miss Madden turned white and eyed Dick for a moment in silence as if fearful of the results of an investigation.

"I don't know what you mean, sir!"

"Oh! don't you? Well, that is exceedingly strange, Miss Madden, when, in some as yet unknown manner, you entered Mr. Gleason's house last night, and stabbed him in the breast."

"I did nothing of the sort, and you are a liar if you say so! Now, come with me to my house and hear *my* version of the story, and I think you will agree that I am in the right. I was not inclined to give you any information at first, but since that old rascal, Gleason, has given part of the business away, I will, in self-defense, give you the rest of it."

So they took the cars and went to Seneca street, to the residence of Miss Madden.

On entrance to the cozy little parlor, Miss Madden excused herself while she removed her wraps.

In the parlor were two young ladies, who were engaged in arranging feathers for hat-work. One of them was exceedingly pretty, and Dick noticed that she cast shy glances at him occasionally. This gave him an idea. Here was an inmate of Miss Madden's house who might, perhaps, know something of interest.

Could she be made useful?

Dick took out a note-book and wrote the following lines:

"What pay are you getting for your work here? Would you exchange for another, and better paying position, if convinced that it was in every way honorable and satisfactory? This means business, but I cannot talk here; do not even address me. If willing to see me outside at some future time, and hear my offer, please bow."

He handed this to her, unseen by the second girl. The recipient of the note looked surprised, both before and after reading, but, after studying Dick's face, bowed slightly. She then wrote an address, and returned the note.

The detective wrote one more question:

"What name?"

"Stella Starr."

Dick took down the name and address, and by this time Miss Madden re-entered, attired in a becoming habit.

"Step into the back-parlor, gentlemen," she directed, and Dick and Billy followed her.

They were given seats, and then Miss Madden resumed:

"Is Mr. Gleason dangerously hurt?"

"Well, possibly not fatally, though he has got a bad wound," was the guarded reply.

"Does he claim that I stabbed him?"

"No; but I do!"

"Oh! I don't care a fig for what *you* claim. You detectives are the most disreputable class of people on the face of the earth. However, that is neither here nor there."

Her manner was wholly insolent, but Bristol heard her without the least visible offense.

"You may know detectives better before this case is ended," he replied, calmly; "the State Prison may teach you manners."

"The question is concerning my experience with James Gleason?"

"Exactly so. Your information may throw some light on the subject. It is my intention to solve this mystery. Now, go on with your explanation!"

"Who is this boy with you?"

"My partner, or, as we say in the West, my side-partner. Go on. He must hear!"

"When I first met Gleason," began Miss Madden, more quietly, "I was a clerk in a little dry goods store on Niagara street, earning a salary so small that I could barely support myself. I went over to the Canadian side, and it was there that I first met James Gleason. As before said, I was very poor at that time, and as he was a gallant sort of a masher, I thought, perhaps, I might do well to court his favor. It seems that, by so doing, I have not succeeded very well."

"No; not at all. Well?"

"He persists that I am haunting him?"

"No, I persist!"

"What makes you do it? I have never been in the man's house. Have I not already told you that? Isn't my word good?"

"Perhaps. But it is not always well for a detective to believe all he hears."

"Well, perhaps when you hear the balance of my story, you will believe me."

"That depends. If it is reasonable, maybe I shall. Go ahead!"

"Well," continued Miss Madden, in the course of time I became engaged to Gleason, and, most likely, should have married him, but a row ensued between us, and we became strangers again. So there you have it all in a nutshell. I have not seen Gleason lately, nor do I want to!"

This ended the interview, and Dick and Billy took leave.

"What think, boss?" inquired the gamin.

"Give it up, Billy. Either the woman is a skillful liar, or she tells the truth. Take your choice."

"Bet she lies!"

"I shouldn't like to wager much on her veracity."

"She says Gleason was a smuggler, an' he says she was one. How d'yer patch that up?"

"It may be that the pot is calling the kettle black, with both of them. Anyhow, the woman is coarse, hot-tempered and cranky."

Then they returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER XI.

TILFORD TAKES A HAND.

ABOUT opposite Fisher's Point dwelt a man named Tilford. He was a fisherman by profession.

The next day Billy and Dick paid a visit to the beach, encountered this fisherman, and requested the pleasure of accompanying him on a trip.

He cheerfully gave his consent for the consideration of half a dollar each, and they set forth in a long, rakish-looking rowboat.

The river was alive with small craft, and Tilford proved to be an adept at capturing the finny tribe.

"You're a dandy at the business!" Dick exclaimed, after watching awhile.

"Well, sir, I orter be, considerin' I've been at it fer ten years. But, I don't always have this sort of luck. There's them as can beat me all holler, an' one of 'em is a woman—a young and darned purty gal, too."

"Indeed! What is her name?"

"Stella Starr. She is not only a fisherwoman, but also a milliner."

Here was news!

Could it be the Stella Starr whom Dick had seen at Miss Madden's?

"Where does this versatile young lady live?" Dick inquired.

"Dunno, just exactly; but I believe she works on Seneca street, somewhere. Mighty fine gal she is, too! She has an old crippled mother to support, as well as a blind father, and I tell ye she has to hustle to make ends meet. I allow she don't make much at the milliner business, so she gits up at daybreak, comes out on the river and hauls in the fish in great shape. Then she goes ashore, sells them to the fish-dealers, and skips off to her other work."

"How does she do in winter? She can't stand the bitter weather, can she?"

"Sart'in sure. Why, she kin stand as much cold as the toughest of us. I've known her to be out the coldest days, and if I do say it—Hello!"

"What's the matter?"

"Why, here she comes now!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"The gal I was tellin' you about—Stella Starr. Je! look at her!—*don't* she pull a bully oar! Bet my mess of fish she can beat any man on the river! I'm somewhat of an oarsman, but I don't count myself *her* equal."

Miss Starr was coming up the river at good speed in a boat of only ordinary style.

And she could row, no mistake, for she soon overtook Tilford.

"Hello! pop! Want to buy my haul? I've got a day off and want to unload!" was her greeting.

"Well, come alongside," Tilford directed, "and let me see how many you've got."

Miss Stella did as directed. She was attired in a lady's sailor suit, and certainly looked very interesting; but, what struck Dick as singular, was that her pretty hands could manipulate the oars so skillfully.

Tilford looked at the mess of fish with the eye of a critic.

The quantity and size exceeded his own.

"Jee whizz! Where'd ye get 'em, Stel?"

"Down the river."

"By ginger! they *are* beauties! I'll give you—lemme see!—two dollars for the lot."

"Not a cent less than five, Mr. Tilford. I can get that at the market."

Mr. Tilford evidently knew this, for he forked over a "V" with alacrity.

"All right!" he acquiesced; "toss 'em over here into the boat. You've got the best of me on *this* bargain, but I will take good care you don't on the next."

"When any one has a chance to get the best of *you* on a bargain, Mr. Tilford, it will be when the world comes to an end. However, here are the fish!"

Then, with her beautiful hands, she began to toss the fish over into Tilford's boat.

"Can't I help you?" asked Dick.
 "You would soil your hands, sir."
 "That is a matter of no moment. They can easily be washed."

So Dick stepped over into her boat and assisted her, Billy acting as "short-stop," whenever a fish threatened to go over the other side of Tilford's boat.

As soon as the cargo was transferred, Miss Starr turned to Dick and observed:

"If you want to see me in reference to the note, perhaps now will be the most available opportunity. I am going to take a row down the river, and we can chat as we go."

"Very well. Shall I take my young friend with me?"

"I have no objections. Where did you pick him up?"

"In New York."

"I thought so. I was once a newsgirl in New York, and came in contact with these gamins. Call your friend aboard, and we will be off. I fancy I know where I can catch a big haul of white fish, and maybe some bass. They are beginning to come to the river in schools, now."

So Billy was called aboard, and the trio set off down the river.

Dick requested the privilege of relieving Miss Starr at the oars, but she laughed at him.

"Why, you can't pull!" she declared. "What do you know about boating? You may be able to ride a horse, but you know nothing of this work. You are a Westerner. I can tell that much, and boats don't run on the prairies!"

From the vicinity of Black Rock the trip toward the lake is a most charming one, more especially when the heavy mist is lifted from off Lake Erie. At least, so it occurred to Dick and Billy.

"Now," resumed Stella, "what do you want to know of Miss Madden?"

"Well, in the first place, do you live in the same house with her?"

"Part of the time. The other part I spend at home with my parents."

"Where do your parents reside?"

"Out on Fourteenth street."

"Do you ever spend the night with Miss Madden?"

"Yes, quite frequently."

"During these times, has she been accustomed to go out evenings?"

Miss Starr reflected.

"Well, on several occasions I have awakened and not found her in bed with me, but supposed she was somewhere about the house. As a rule, I sleep in a separate room."

"Do you remember the hours when you missed her? Was it about midnight?"

"About eleven."

"Hum! That would be just about time," Dick muttered. "By George! I am more than ever convinced of it."

"Of what?"

"That I am nearing the climax of what has hitherto been a mystery."

"May I ask what that is?"

"Miss Madden is playing ghost!"

This caused Miss Starr to laugh.

"Playing ghost?" she echoed. "What makes you think that? She is a pretty healthy-looking ghost, is she not?"

"Nevertheless, she is playing that dodge, and I am sure of it. Have you any knowledge of Mr. James Gleason?"

"No, I have not. I don't know— Wait; let me think. Yes. Is he the ex-stock-broker?"

"That is the man."

"He lives on Niagara street, don't he?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I know him; he sometimes comes down along the river and watches us catching fish."

"You are quite sure you never saw him at Miss Madden's?" Dick inquired.

"Yes, sir; I never saw him in that part of

the city. From what I can judge, he keeps himself pretty well to his own house."

"Have you ever heard Miss Madden mention him?"

"Yes; I think I have. After your visit to her house she said that she wished that Gleason and you were in Hades."

They were gliding down the river, between the American and Canadian shores—city on one side and beautiful vistas on the other.

"I want to employ you," Dick said to Stella, "but I must be assured of your utter fidelity."

"If you think I can be of any aid to you, I shall be happy to hear your proposal, sir. But, I would not want to do anything that would anger my employer."

"If you lose your employment with the Madden woman, I will see your salary paid until you get another job."

"What do you want me to do, sir?"

"Watch Miss Mabel Madden! Never let her get out of your sight, especially at night. If she leaves her house, you are to follow her every movement. I will give you ten dollars, now; if you need more, come to the Tift House, and you will find either me or a letter awaiting you there. Will you enter my service?"

Miss Starr looked perplexed.

"Are you sure you could get me another position?"

"If not, I will, out of my own purse, put up all the money you need."

It was clear that Stella was a conscientious young lady, so the detective, without betraying any important part of his business, said enough to reassure and satisfy her.

The compact was at length made, and he had another ally who promised to be valuable.

CHAPTER XII.

BILLY'S BIG BILLIARDS.

THE day being a beautiful one, Dick and his boy partner continued along with Miss Starr, not in the least averse to her companionship, for she was a charming conversationalist, and taught them much about fishing that they had never known before.

At noon they returned and had luncheon, and then Dick and Billy went back to Mr. Gleason's.

They found the old gentleman doing finely. He was up and able to be about, although he was quite pale.

"Well, what's the best word?" Dick asked. "Have you seen any more ghosts?"

"Thank heavens, no! What have you found out?"

"Very little. I do not propose to disclose what discoveries I have made until later on. I am of the opinion that I am on the right trail, however."

Mr. Gleason went to his safe and returned with fifty dollars, which he gave to Dick.

"You can have more if you need it," he observed.

"No; this will answer all present purposes. By the way, has Ennis been around since I was here last?"

"No."

"I guess he won't be. Well, we will wait here until night. I suppose you will not object to a little company, eh?"

"Indeed I don't object," replied Gleason. "It will be a god-send. I have a private billiard-room, and, if you know anything about the game, we will amuse ourselves."

"Bet I can beat both of you!" asseverated Billy. "Didn't know I was der boss of der Bowery, did you? Well, I jest are! I got an iron medal fer bein' an expert!"

"What did you do, Billy? What did you score?"

"Scored der hull business! Tell yer what, I'm some on bilyerds. You put up der sugar an' I'll agree ter knock out Slosson, or any der rest of de perfesh'nals!"

So they adjourned to the billiard-room,

which proved to be a beautiful apartment, fitted up as only a gentleman of means can fit one up. These was the coziest of carpets upon the floor, rich hangings upon the wall, and damask curtains at the windows. The furniture was elegant.

It was a place fit for a prince to pass away his idle hours.

"What do you think of it?" asked Mr. Gleason.

"Very fine!" replied Dick. "It must have cost you a good sum to fit it up so splendidly."

"It did. I am not a stingy man, and what I do, or get, I have of the best. Now look at the table!"

It was a beautiful one, made by the famous Collenders, and apparently built to order. The cushions were what is known in billiard parlance as very "lively," and the solid frame was of mahogany, with silver mountings.

"Now," directed Mr. Gleason, "I'll look on while you and your young friend play a game. It will give me more pleasure than to play myself."

"Pshaw! Bucket can't play!" Dick affirmed. "What does a boy know about billiards? However, I will try him a game, just for the fun of it."

"If I don't beat you, go and ketch a snake and I will eat it," Billy retorted. "I wasn't raised around the 'ristocratic parts o' New York 'thout being onto der games, you bet!"

So the balls were produced and the game began, Dick proposing that it be for sixty points.

Confident of victory, Dick played rather recklessly, at first. He reckoned without his host, however, for it soon became apparent that his boy partner knew as much about the game as himself.

Bristol led off with a run of nineteen.

Mr. Bucket followed with four.

Then Dick made a foul.

Billy followed with a score of eleven points.

"That's exceedingly singular!" exclaimed Gleason.

"What is singular?" Dick inquired.

"Why, those prophetic numbers—four and eleven!"

Dick laughed.

"Pshaw! they have no significance."

"Go on with the game, and you will find that the boy's first three scores will be *four, eleven, forty-four!*"

And he was right in the prediction. Dick's run was twenty, which he considered to be exceedingly good, and which he believed would "rattle" Master Bucket, but it did not have that effect.

Billy's next score was exactly forty-four, as Mr. Gleason had predicted, which left him only one point to go.

"There! what did I tell you?" cried Gleason, rising excitedly and pacing the floor. "Those infernal numbers again! *Four, eleven, forty-four!* What do you think now?"

"The coincidence is both singular and striking," the detective admitted, "but, of course, it is nothing more. I hope you don't believe that the ghost governed our runs?"

"Yet you can't deny the evidence of your eyes and senses. You have seen the supernatural visitor; you have heard those accursed words uttered; and now your boy companion has run out the mysterious numbers at billiards!"

Dick did not reply, but set to work and ran the game out, much to the disgust of Billy, who considered that he had a sure thing.

Gleason and Dick then played a couple of games, after which they returned to the parlor, where they spent the balance of the afternoon.

As their talk did not interest Billy, he went out for a stroll around the neighborhood.

He was gone until near dusk. When he returned, his face was beaming with smiles.

"Well, Billy, what is it?" Dick asked. "You look in particularly good-humor."

"I am."

"What is the cause?"

"Been playin' policy—der numbers have just come out, and I'm a clear hundred dollars in pocket."

"Get out!"

"Fact, boss! I've got the sugar right in my pocket. I near bu'sted the bank, and de feller what wrote der polercy kicked like a Texan steer. But he doughed over the money, all der same, when I threatened ter have him pulled in if he didn't."

"You young rascal! What numbers did you choose?"

"Guess."

"Nonsense! How should I be able to guess?"

"Well," declared Billy, with a broad grin, "it was der 'coon' numbers—four, eleven, forty-four!"

"Well, you are in luck."

"What about the kerincidence o' the numbers?"

"Chance, and nothing more. You played; you chose your desired numbers; you won. That is all there is to it."

"Reckon you won't be converted, no-how."

"I intend to stick to common sense!" Deadwood Dick retorted.

When the evening was well advanced, Mr. Gleason arose.

"Nearly twelve o'clock!" he observed, gravely. "It is about time for the specter."

"I suspect that we shall not see it to-night," answered Dick.

"Why not?"

"Cunning as your phantom visitor has proved herself, she must know—if she is a creature of the flesh—that there is a limit to imposture. I am prepared for her. She will be rash to come again."

At that moment there was a knock at the outside door.

"The servant has retired," remarked Gleason. "Will you answer it, Billy?"

"Not me, boss!" was the prompt response.

"I'll go!" volunteered Dick. "I'll perforate the ghost with bullets, if it is it. I think more likely that it is Ennis."

"Possibly. If it is any one else, don't admit them. Answer the summons, and we will see what develops."

This time it did not prove to be Ennis, but Stella Starr.

"Come in!" Deadwood Dick quickly directed.

"No," she replied; "I cannot stop. I have only come to report."

"Then you have news?"

"Yes. I have been following Mabel Madden. She has been over on the Canadian side twice, and each time I followed close after her. She has a little row-boat, and in it went across the line. I followed in the boat I usually use."

"Where did she go?"

"To old Fort Erie. You cannot guess her errand."

"I will leave you to tell me, Miss Starr."

"She took a train for Niagara City. I took the same train in a different coach. She went to a wholesale jobbing house that deal in laces, feathers and fine furs. When she emerged from this store she carried a bundle of considerable size."

"Yes, I see. But, how is it custom officers did not investigate her package?"

"Oh! she's cute, for, instead of coming over in her own boat, she employed a man to row it across to Black Rock, where there are no custom officials, while she, with her baggage, came over by way of the International Bridge. As I could not follow her, I went back to the store. When she came I was busy at work, so she had no suspicion

of my having been maneuvering against her."

"Have you any idea where she took her smuggled goods?"

"Yes; to a store in which Gleason is interested. She left them there."

"Gleason claims to be out of business."

"Yes; but while not an active partner in the proper sense of the word, he has interests to further."

"But, surely, if they are enemies, she would not sell her smuggled goods to him."

"I have reasoned that out. Although Gleason has money in the store business, he is never seen there as a partner, and rarely in any way. Probably he does not know their customers, and probably, too, Miss Madden does not know he has an interest there."

"Well reasoned!"

"One word more and I will go. The last I saw of Miss Madden she was near this house. When I lost sight of her I came to make my report."

Deadwood Dick felt that he had cause to be grateful to his fair assistant, and he thanked her warmly. She then took her departure and Bristol returned to Gleason's room.

"Who was there?" the latter asked.

"One of my helpers; a lady whom I need not name. Her report satisfies me that I have located your artful schemer and ghost correctly."

"I still doubt it, but go on. Why do you think she is such an artful schemer?"

"Well, my agent followed Mabel over to the Canadian side. There, she purchased furs, and brought them back here to Buffalo."

"Well, what then?"

"These goods were smuggled. You must surely know something about it."

"I do not."

"The smuggled property was disposed of at a store in which *you* are said to have a pecuniary interest."

"I?" cried Gleason, with considerable show of surprise. "It is false; you have been wrongly informed. I have no such business interest."

"Then let us say no more about it," Deadwood Dick responded, impatiently. "Your ghost may come next; for the Madden woman has been seen near here. Are you ready for the phantom?"

"Don't ask me, but let us do something to kill time."

So the trio sat down at a table and indulged in a sociable of cards, awaiting the arrival of Miss Madden, the "spook."

But, the night passed, and Miss Madden did not materialize.

James Gleason uttered a long sigh of relief when dawn began to stream in through the windows.

"Thank God!" he said. "One night passed, without seeing the apparition. I hope many another will!"

"I do, too, for your sake," Dick replied. "But, I fear it is a vain hope. If the Madden woman has set her mind on badgering the life out of you, she will not desist until she has succeeded in her game."

"Curse her! I'll have her arrested this very day!" Gleason declared.

"Dare you? Won't she turn the tables on you, and won't you get the worst of it?"

The question nettled Gleason.

"Bah!" he cried. "She cannot prove anything to my injury."

But Gleason did not again refer to his plan of having Mabel arrested.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK RECEIVES STRANGE NEWS.

JUST after daylight breakfast was served, when Dick and Billy returned to the hotel, and indulged in a solid forenoon's sleep.

After dinner they hired a hack and were

driven out to the race course, saw a few running races, and then were conducted to various points of interest, including the parade ground, the Park and the Historical Museum.

By the time they arrived back at the hotel, it was supper-time.

Dick was at once given a surprise in the shape of an announcement from the chief clerk.

"Lady wishes to see you, sir!"

"A lady? Did she give her name?"

"Yes. It was Mrs. Gleason, the divorced wife of James Gleason!"

"James Gleason, of Niagara street?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought he was a bachelor."

"Not much!" replied the clerk. "I've heard say that he had several wives living!"

"Is it possible?" demanded Bristol, in amazement.

"So goes the report."

Leaving Billy, Dick ascended to the parlor to interview Mrs. Gleason.

She was a matron of perhaps forty-five years, round-faced and rather inclined to portliness. She was still what many would call handsome.

She was accompanied by a small boy who, in feature, very closely resembled the lady.

"You are the Mr. Bristol who is a detective, I believe?" she questioned, when he had given his name.

"Yes, madam."

"You are in the employ of my husband, James Gleason?"

"I am in the employ of James Gleason—yes. But, I supposed that he was a bachelor."

"Well, he is not. He is my husband, and this is his child. The chief of police informed me that you were detailed to hunt up a ghost that haunts Mr. Gleason."

"Yes. I was summoned all the way here from New York, for that very purpose."

The lady seemed to know the whole story, and Dick did not see fit to lose any time in denials.

"Have you seen the ghost?" she continued.

"Well, no; not exactly. I've seen something which many would believe to be a ghost, and which strangely appears and disappears; but, as I do not believe in supernatural materializations, I am inclined to the opinion that this particular ghost is wholly human," replied Dick.

Mrs. Gleason shrugged her matronly shoulders and smiled.

"I have heard about the case," she observed, "but never, like yourself, take any stock in apparitions. Do you have any idea who is playing the ghost?"

"I can answer that question better by asking one: Have you any knowledge of one Mabel Madden, who lives on Seneca street?"

"Yes, I have."

"What do you know of her?"

"Nothing in her favor. It was on her account that I left Gleason."

"Why so?"

"Because he spent more time in her society than in mine. I finally objected, but without effect. They were allies in some 'crooked' work, though I do not know just what. No doubt they are still allies."

"Are you divorced?"

"No; but his first wife was. She did not live with him two months. She is now deceased."

"How long since you lived with Gleason?"

"Over two years."

Dick reflected.

"You think, Mrs. Gleason, that my employer is a rascal?"

"Yes."

"And that he is still engaged in some nefarious business?"

"I haven't a doubt of it, sir—not a single doubt."

"You are inclined to the theory that he

and Mabel Madden are working in collusion, I see?"

"I am."

"Then why this ghost racket?"

"I don't know as I can answer that question. That he is worried, there can be no doubt. But he deserves to be worried, the scoundrel!" and her eyes flashed vengefully.

"You are vindictive."

"I have reason to be. I hate him—*hate* him! Hanging is too good for the wretch!" and she left the room without giving any definite reason for her call.

The detective could but wonder if this fresh incident had particular meaning.

Returning to the grand reception-room below, Dick encountered his German aid, Herr Ennis.

"What have you got to communicate?" Dick asked.

"Vel, I vatch der 'ouse of dot Mabel Madden, and I find me oud nottings. She stay in der 'ouse. So I takes a look around Gleason's."

"What did you see or learn?"

"He had a caller."

"Man or woman?"

"A vomans!"

"Old or young?"

"Middle aged. She haf a leedle poy vid her."

"Ah! How was she dressed?"

"In black. She wore a vail."

The description vividly recalled Mrs. Gleason, but it seemed absurd to believe that it had been she.

"Did she enter the house?"

Ennis replied in the affirmative.

"Did you notice who admitted her?"

"She admitted herself with a latch-key, or some odder kind of key."

"How long did she remain?"

"I don't know, for I come away."

"This is strange," Bristol mused. "I don't seem to understand it. While to all intents the enemy of James Gleason, this woman goes to visit him at his own house!"

After a pause, still reluctant to believe the theory that was in his mind, he questioned Ennis as to the minute personal peculiarities of the woman and child he had seen.

The result only confirmed his opinion.

Mrs. Gleason had really gone to the house! Astounding fact!

Had she made the visit as an enemy, intending to force war upon him? or had she been deceiving Dick earlier in the day?

"Let that be as it may," he thought, resolutely, "I'll have an explanation out of Gleason to-night, or sever connection with him!"

He was full of this purpose when, after bidding Ennis adieu, he set out with Billy for the Niagara street residence.

CHAPTER XIV.

A THREATENING LETTER.

ON his arrival at the Gleason residence, Dick rung the door-bell, and the summons was answered by Gleason in person.

"Ah! is it you, Mr. Bristol?" he said. "I was afraid you were not coming. Walk in!"

"Oh! I'm generally on hand when there's anything in the wind. Seen any more of your ghosts?"

"No; I don't want to, either."

"I don't wonder, if it was anything like the one I interviewed at the Tiff House to-day!"

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I interviewed your ex-wife to-day. She called on me at the hotel." Gleason's face flushed, and his gaze fell in confusion.

"At least she claimed to be your wife? Was she right?"

"Very likely she was," was the reluctant reply.

"How is it you did not tell me you had been married and separated from your wife?"

"I did not consider it necessary."

"I understand you have been married more than once."

"Well, what if I have? It has no bearing on this case."

"I don't know about that. Where is your *first* wife?"

"Dead. Exactly as to her present residence I am not informed."

"Your second wife does not seem to regard you exactly as a full-fledged angel."

"She never did."

"Why not?"

"Oh! we never got on well together, for her temper was too violent. It was that of a hyena!"

"If you are enemies, why did she come here to-day?"

"Come here?" echoed Gleason, showing great surprise. "She did *not* come here!"

"She was seen to do so by one of my agents. The fact is, Mr. Gleason, you are not treating me square. You are simply fooling with me."

"No; no, indeed, I am not! But, Mr. Bristol, it is impossible that she should have been here without my knowledge, and I swear that I do not know of it."

"But she was seen to enter," Dick persisted.

"How did she get in?"

"With a latch-key."

"Very strange!—very strange! Mr. Bristol, you still look doubtful. I do not understand it at all—indeed, I don't!"

"You do! You are keeping something back."

"On my word of honor, I am not. I know no more about the movements of that woman than a babe."

"You are sure?"

"I will take my oath to it!"

Here was another mystery.

"Has any woman been here to-day?" Dick asked.

"None, whatever!"

This unqualified statement only increased Dick's doubts.

"That woman entered your house to-day, and you know it."

"I know nothing of the sort. If she entered here, it was without my knowledge. Who do you say saw her enter?"

"A man named Ennis."

"The detective?"

"Yes."

"I can't believe it."

"It is true, nevertheless."

"How did you say she gained entrance?"

"With a latch-key?"

"Was she seen to leave the house again?"

"No; at least not while Ennis was on the watch."

"Then, possibly, she may be here in hiding now. Let's make a search."

And they did. They investigated every room from cellar to garret, but all to no purpose. No Mrs. Gleason was found.

"I don't believe she was here at all. Your man Ennis lied!" Gleason decided at last.

"What would have been his object?"

"I don't know. He couldn't have expected to make any money by so doing, could he?"

"No. Well, we'll wait and see what the night brings forth."

Midnight came once more, but it brought no ghost, nor apparition of any kind.

"I reckon the specter has been frightened away," Dick decided. "It evidently don't fancy the presence of a New York detective on its favorite stamping-ground. I guess we might as well go back to the hotel, Billy?"

"No! no! You must remain here. I cannot—I *dare* not stay alone. I will pay you your own price, but you must remain!" Gleason cried.

So they did remain, but the hours fled by without any new developments, and morning dawned dark and cheerless.

"Well, there has been no ghost yet, Mr. Gleason, so I think you are safe for another day, eh?"

"Heaven knows; I hope so!"

"Well, we will return to the hotel and get some rest."

"You will be back to-night?"

"If you wish it."

"I do, certainly. Wait a moment," and Mr. Gleason left the room.

He soon returned and handed Deadwood Dick a roll of bills.

"There is money to defray your expenses. Don't fail to come back to-night."

"I will be here at dusk," Dick assured, and he and Billy were gone.

They sought the hotel, and indulged in a good half day's sleep.

They then arose, and going down to the office, Dick received a letter superscribed to his name, with the hotel as the address.

On opening this, he was somewhat surprised to find the following:

"MR. BRISTOL:—The best thing you can do is to leave Buffalo. You are not wanted here, and if you don't want to bring trouble on yourself, you will heed this warning. A word to the wise is sufficient. U—No!"

"Well, that's cool!" Dick mused. "I don't know, but I will know!"

"Any news, boss?"

"No; not in particular."

The writing was in a woman's hand, but not very well executed. It indicated extreme nervousness.

Leaving Billy at the hotel, he went around to pay Miss Mabel Madden another call. He was beginning to get more and more puzzled over this complication of mysteries. Was James Gleason a guilty or a persecuted man? Was Mrs. Gleason a persecuted woman, or a schemer? Was Miss Madden a victim, or a swindler and a would-be murderess?

On his arrival at Miss Madden's he was informed that Mabel was not in.

"She went over to Canada, to-day, and has not had time yet to return."

"What did she go to Canada for?"

"Really, I don't know."

"At what time do you expect her back?"

"Not before night."

"Does she frequently go over there?"

"Yes."

"Yes" and "no" was all he could get out of the woman at the door. Evidently, she was well posted as to how to answer inquiries.

That night was spent at Gleason's, but without result.

The next night, however, "panned out" more richly, if not satisfactorily.

Dick and the ex-broker played cards until nearly twelve, while Billy reposed complacently on the sofa.

Suddenly there came a sepulchral groan.

Dick and Gleason leaped to their feet and glared about them.

No intruder had yet appeared.

"It is the ghost!" gasped Gleason, now deathly white.

The two men waited.

Would the sound come again?

It did come!

Shortly after one o'clock there was a blood-curdling shriek, followed by a peal of eldritch laughter.

Just *where* it came from was not apparent.

Careful search failed to give any explanation.

The shriek and laughter aroused Billy Bucket.

"What was that?" he demanded.

"Give it up, Billy. I've about come to the conclusion that it is the Evil One, after you."

"Then, under the sofa I go!" replied Billy, suiting the action to the word.

No more strange noises were heard, and, to

the relief of Gleason, day once more dawned, and Dick and Billy took their leave again.

"This aire gittin' ter be monotonuss, strikes me," complained Billy. "I don't see's we're any more likely ter ketch ther ghost than when we first come here. Reckon I'll not stay much longer, boss. If that spook comes again, you'll see me scoot for New York. I kin have more fun, and make more money there, at my old perfesh, and not run the risk o' havin' my hair jumpin' out o' my head by der roots!"

CHAPTER XV.

SMUGGLED GOODS.

A WEEK passed before there were any new developments in the case. Dick and Billy spent each night at the house of the haunted man, but nothing more of the ghost was seen.

Dan Ennis, who had been keeping track of the movements of Mabel Madden, announced that he had made no discoveries.

"Dot vimmens is keepin' herself purdty quviet, mine friend," he reported. "She go der house oud but leedle bit, and den but short time. I vatch her close, till I vas all played oud, and I don't was see her go no more in der direction of Plack Rock. I t'ink she not dot ghost, py any means!"

"Have you seen anything of the other woman?"

"Vot womans?"

"Mrs. Gleason."

"No; but I dells you vot I haf seen. I haf seen dot man Gleason cross over der river several times, in a row-boat."

"Did you follow him?"

"No; I had me no boat. But, I dells you one t'ing."

"Well, what is that?"

"Ven he goes over, it is always schoost two o'clock in der afternoon."

"When does he return?"

"Aboud four. Ven he goes away he haf noddings in his boat but himself. Ven he comes back he haf a bundle."

"What kind of a bundle?"

"Von of dose vot is like dem pack-peddlers carry around on their backs, done up in bed-ticking."

"How big is this bundle?"

"Oh! Id vas shust apoud as big as a man can handily carry."

"Does Gleason carry it when he lands?"

"No. He vas met by a big red-headed Irishmans, who carries der bundle to a hack vot is vaiting close by. Den Gleason gets inder de hack, and vas driven away right quvick."

"Where to?"

"I don'd vas know, oxept it vas to his own 'ouse. At any rate he goes in dat directions."

"All right. Here are a few dollars. Keep an eye on the place where he lands, have a boat in readiness, and the next time he goes over you follow, and don't lose track of him until you find what he does with the bundle."

"All right, Mr. Bristles; I vil do it. I am aboud so anxious to ferret oud der pizness as you vas, for I t'ink der' vas some gum shennanigan game about id, eh?"

"Yes, so do I. You attend to the river job and I'll look in another direction. If we don't find out anything soon I'll throw up the job, and resign my commission in the United States Special Corps."

The last words were spoken with a slight smile which meant a good deal. Bristol had not been idle, and he had well-defined theories, at last.

That afternoon, after two o'clock, Dick and Billy repaired to the residence of James Gleason and Dick rung the bell. The summons was answered by the servant who had succeeded the colored man in that position. The darky had had too much of the ghost.

"Mr. Gleason in?" Dick asked.

"No, sir; he is not."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know, sir; I presume he has gone for his usual afternoon walk."

"Oh! very likely. Well, show us to the parlor, and we will await his return."

"I have no authority to do so, sir. It is understood that I am to admit no one during Mr. Gleason's absence."

"But, being in Gleason's employ, I demand admittance!" Dick declared, and, pushing the servant aside, he forced himself into the hall, followed by Billy.

"Master will be very angry!" expostulated the servant. "I shall lose my place."

"If you do, I'll get you another. So set your heart at rest on that score," and Dick and Billy entered the parlor and comfortably seated themselves.

The servant stared at them in dismay.

"I shall get the bounce, sure!" he groaned following the two detectives.

"No, you will not; I'll fix it for you,"

Dick replied. "Have you seen the ghost, recently?"

"No," the servant answered.

"What do you make of it, when you have seen it?"

"I don't know."

"Did you ever tackle it?"

"Yes, I did!"

"How?—in what manner?"

"The first time I saw it I flung a hatchet at it."

"Did it have any effect?"

"Not in the least. It hurt the air more than it did the ghost."

"The second time—how about that?"

"I flung a club at it."

"Did you hit it?"

"Yes. It yelled like bloody thunder, and then disappeared."

"Darned queer!" muttered Billy; "the ghost made a home-run on this feller's base-hit! That's ag'inst the rules."

"What then?" Dick continued.

"I was too much scared to follow; I saw no more."

"Then you think it a genuine ghost?"

"Can't say, sir. Besides, I'm not allowed to give any opinion in regard to it."

"Who objects?"

"Mr. Gleason."

"He does, does he?" and Dick subsided in thought.

That Gleason was playing a deep game was hour by hour becoming more evident.

The man retired, and Dick and Billy proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

There was a box of rare Havanas on the mantel-piece, to which they helped themselves, and also a bottle marked "Laudanum—Poison," which Dick quietly dropped into his pocket.

The servant reappeared with a tray of dainty luncheon, as if to placate his guests, though he was still watchful and suspicious.

While so vigilant he would be in the way of their plans for the night, so, acting on this belief he took advantage of the temporary absence, and, dropping a desired quantity of the drug into a glass, filled it up with wine.

When the man returned Dick cordially said:

"Have a drink, Sammy?"

"Thankee, sir; but the boss does not allow me to drink."

"Oh! he'll permit this, if I offer it to you."

Sammy took the proffered glass and poured down its contents with a gusto that showed he was not unused to such beverages.

"Sit down, Sammy, until your master comes, and we will have a chat. Where do you hail from? Are you a native of this State?"

"No, sir; I come from England."

"You don't talk like an Englishman."

"Perhaps not, because I come of a refined family. I am, in truth, the son of a lord; but, certain troubles forced me to leave England. Here, in America, I am forced to accept a menial's position, in order to earn a living."

Sammy yawned, and Dick and Billy resumed their luncheon.

Presently Sammy's eyes closed altogether, and he breathed heavily.

"He's done for!" Dick announced. "Now, no time is to be lost. I'm going to search this house from top to bottom. I'm going to investigate it thoroughly."

So, leaving Sammy sound asleep in the chair, they descended to the cellar and began operations there.

Every joint and crevice was examined by lamp-light. Every box and barrel was overhauled, but nothing was found of any consequence.

"Ghosts don't live here," Billy asseverated. "Them rotten 'taters would kill 'em!"

Finding nothing of interest, they next went up-stairs.

There were six rooms upon the first floor, all of which they carefully explored.

Room after room was visited.

No ghost was found, nor any signs of one. Everything about the house seemed in perfect order.

"It's no go, Dick!" Billy decided, mournfully.

"It does look so, but let's keep on. We may find out something, yet."

The attic was next visited.

Here a discovery was made. In one of the rooms was a trunk, with the lid up-lifted.

In this trunk was a quantity of silk and laces—goods, Dick at once inferred, smuggled from the Canada side.

"Here's a go!" Billy proclaimed, more cheerfully. "Old Gleason is a smuggler, ain't he, boss?"

"This looks very much like it."

"What are you going to do?"

Just then, they received a start; the door-bell was heard to ring.

"It's Gleason returned!" Dick cried.

It was a most untimely interruption.

To be discovered in ransacking the house was not just then to Dick's liking.

"We must get out of here, Billy!"

"You bet! Here we go!"

And down the stairs they went, two steps at a time.

When they reached the parlor they crouched behind the sofa, which now stood across one corner of the room, and were none too soon, for presently Gleason came into the room, furious with rage because his servant had not answered his summons.

"Curse that Sammy! I'll break his head!" he cried. "I'll learn him what he is employed for. Lucky I had a key. Hello!"

He had discovered Sammy in the chair.

"Bless my eyes! if he isn't fast asleep. Say, wake up, here!"

He shook the man soundly, but Sammy did not waken; the narcotic had done its work, and done it well.

"Well, by thunder!" ejaculated Gleason, "this beats the Dutch! Why, the infernal rascal is dead drunk! He's been drinking up my wine!"

He shook Sammy again, but to no avail; the sleeper could not be aroused, and Gleason sat down as if in despair.

"I don't half like this," he muttered. "It don't look right. Sammy never drank before, and there are two glasses here, on the table. He would not have been likely to use them both. Everything indicates that he has been entertaining some one, at my expense, during my absence. But who?"

This was a question not easy to answer, and it put Gleason in a quandary.

"There may be some one else in the house!" he cried suddenly; and rising, left the room to investigate

"Now's our time!" whispered Dick.
 "Let's take a skip!"
 And they skipped, leaving Gleason to work out the mystery as best he could.

CHAPTER XVI.

D. ENNIS MAKES A REPORT.

DICK was now pretty well satisfied on one point. James Gleason was still a smuggler of goods from the Canada side, else why all those goods in the attic—fine silks and laces whose store value, on the American side, would amount to thousands of dollars.

Mrs. Gleason's outline of her ex-husband's character appeared to be correct.

But, how did Gleason dispose of his illegally-gotten merchandise? Was he really a partner in the store? That was to be determined.

Dick and Billy met Stella Starr on Main street, near Court Square, a little later.

"Well, what luck?" asked Bristol.

"None, whatever. Miss Madden has been out of the house but once in a week, and then it was only to buy stock."

"Did you follow her?"

"I did," replied Miss Starr.

"Where does she buy her stock?"

"Of a Jew named Harris, on Franklin street."

"Does she buy a large stock at a time?"

"No. She does not need to, considering how often she brings packages from the Canadian side."

"Since it is clear that she is a smuggler, it would seem she gets stock enough, that way, and only buys of this man as a blind. Eh?"

"That is my own theory."

"You are quite sure, then, that Miss Madden has not left her house after dark?"

"Yes; I think I can say I am. Her room is just across the hall from mine, now, and I have remained up nights until after twelve, but without hearing her leave the house."

"Yet she might have done so, noiselessly?"

"Possibly. Of course I couldn't swear she had not, for I would be swearing to what I do not know. My belief is, however, that she has not left the house after nightfall. We work until late, and, if she left, we should be apt to know it."

"One question more: You know Mrs. Gleason, the ex-wife of James Gleason?"

"Yes, I know of her."

"I see. She and Miss Madden are enemies, I believe?"

"Yes; and bitter ones, too."

Dick bade Stella good-day, and he and Billy continued on their way.

"The next move is to find Ennis," Dick remarked. "He may have found out something that will come in handy."

But, though they searched high and low, Ennis failed to materialize until toward night, when he suddenly turned up at the Tift House, where Dick and Billy were resting.

"Any news?" Dick asked, eagerly.

"Vel, yes, a leedle."

"Then out with it!"

"Vell, I dells you. I vent down to der river, and, pyme-py, along come old man Gleason. I kept oud of sight purdty much, and I see him get into his boat and pe rowed over der river to Fort Erie."

"Well?"

"Vel, I stay me in dot neighborhood until he comes pack. He vasn't gone very long, and, when he comes pack, he had dot big bundle v'ot I dells you apoud. This he took to his house, vere he goes himseluf soon."

"Vel, I follow him, and I vatch dot house. Pime-by I see you and dot poy come out purty quick, and I know you had been dere v'ile das boss was gone."

"I keep me oud of your sight, vor I no vant you to see me. I make up mine head to vatch dot house on t'e quiet, und find out something."

"Well, did you find out anything?"

"Pe sure I did! In der first blace, Gleason he pe havin' a goot many visitors."

"What kind of visitors?"

"Dey vas most of 'em pack-peddlers—Sheeneys!"

"You are sure they were peddlers?"

"I vas; I knew some of dem."

"Well, what else?"

"Vel, v'en dey vent into Gleason's house dey haff no packs. V'en dey comes oud dey haff packs on deir backs."

"How many were there of them?"

"Six."

"Did any one enter Gleason's house besides the peddlers?"

"Yes, dot voman who used to be Mr. Gleason's wife."

"The deuce you say. How long did she stay?"

"I don't vas know. She hadn't come oud yet, v'en I comes away, so I t'inks dot I petter was come and dell you about id."

"Which was right. I shall know better how to act now," Dick replied. "Gleason is engaged in the smuggling business."

"Yaw! dot vas it. He gets goots cheap on der odder side, and make a big brofit on dem ofer here. Dot vas shust v'ot's der matter mit Hanner!"

"The woman who claims to be his divorced wife—I wonder what she was doing there?"

"Don'd know. Perhaps dey haf maked oop vonce more."

"More likely they're working in collusion and never have been actually separated!" Dick declared.

"That's my think," Billy agreed.

"Vel, maybe dot is der case. But, how appoud dot ghost? I don'd vas can make dot oud, nohow."

"That ghost," Deadwood Dick confidently replied, "is, or has been, Mabel Madden. It has not been active of late, and the reason is plain—the ghost is scared! Why she has haunted James Gleason we may know better later, but, it is clear that she hates him bitterly, and wishes to worry the life out of him for revenge."

"Strange dot he should pe afraid off der voman."

He is uncertain whether to think the apparition human or unsubstantial shadow. I have a theory now why he employs us detectives.

"V'ot vas dot?"

"First, to have company when it comes; next, in the hope that his companion will shoot the ghost dead, if the 'ghost' is a creature of the flesh. Of course this is only a theory, but it may prove correct. He is superstitious; he wavers between two extremes in his belief."

"An' wants you ter shoot the animal, ef it's a real woman. Eh, boss? Why don't he try his own hand?"

"He has, but the hand was probably very shaky then."

"Is the Madden woman inter the smug-glin' racket?" Billy inquired.

"How can we doubt it? Stella Starr, who is to be believed implicitly, tells us how hard Mabel worked to get her packages across the line unseen. Of course she was doing some smuggling. My theory is that she and Gleason were partners in the illegal traffic before their quarrel. After that each feared the other, and each tried to make a show of being out of the business. By a curious chance, the Madden woman has been disposing of her ill-gotten gains in the very store where Gleason is a partner in secret!"

"Reckon you figger it 'bout right," Billy agreed.

"Dot vas about it," Ennis added.

"Now," Dick resumed, "I feel so sure of my position that we will carry the war into the enemy's camp. I'll get a warrant for the arrest, for smuggling, of both Gleason and Madden. I'll try to frighten her into a con-

fession of her ghostly antics; Gleason I'll humble even more. Whether I arrest them really depends on the future."

Further conversation was here interrupted by a rap on the door.

"Come in!" Dick called out.

A servant entered.

"A note for Mr. Bristol!" he announced.

Dick took the missive and tore it open.

It was from Stella Starr, and ran as follows:

"Miss Madden is dying! She wants to see you!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE APPARITION NO MORE.

DEADWOOD DICK's surprise at receiving this communication was great, but he lost no time in reaching Miss Madden's residence. His ring was answered by Stella Starr.

"I received your note," he began, abruptly, "and came at once. What is the trouble?"

"Miss Madden, never strong, has been ailing for some days, and has been attacked at last with hemorrhages. Her very hours are numbered."

"And she wishes to see me?"

"Yes, at once."

Then Stella led the way to the dying woman's room. She was as white as the pillow on which her head rested, and looked more than ever like the apparition of Gleason's house. She seemed pleased at sight of Dick.

"Come near and be seated," she directed, in a husky voice. "I am glad you came—so glad. I hardly expected you would, though."

"Oh! I lost no time in answering the summons," Dick replied, drawing a chair near the bed. "I am sorry to see you so ill, Miss Madden. Is there not something I can do to alleviate your suffering?"

"No. I am past all human aid. Besides, I do not know as I would have it otherwise, if I could. I am alone in the world, without anything or any one to live for. Of late I have seen my approaching fate, and have made what earthly preparations I can. I believe that all will be well with me. I only regret that a certain man must remain in a state of prosperity," and her eyes glittered.

"Your animosity toward Gleason does not seem to vanish, even in your dying hour, Miss Madden?" Dick remarked.

"No, it does not. When you hear my story, you will scarcely wonder. You want to hear it, as a matter of course?"

"I am here to listen to what you have to say, and to be of any service to you that lies in my power to give," Dick replied.

"You are a gentleman worthy of confidence, so I will tell you the story of my life, to show you that I am not all evil, but, before I try to excuse my weaknesses, let me confess my sins. Have you solved the ghost mystery?"

"I still think the ghost was yourself."

"You are right; it was I. There are secret passages and sliding panels in the house, and I have used them and other devices to terrify him. Why I did it I will state later. First, let me tell what weighs heaviest against me."

"When at Gleason's you had your clothes, money and watch taken. I was the thief, but they are not lost to you. They are in that package yonder, and you are to take them away with you."

"The warning letter received by Gleason, the letter sent to you signed 'U-No,' and the writing on the wall were all my work, I admit."

"The wound inflicted upon Gleason with the knife was made by me. I yielded to a sudden impulse, or I would never have gone so far."

"Stella has confessed that you have proof that I have been a smuggler. Such was the fact, but I was first led into it by Gleason."

It is impossible for me to clear my character. Over a week ago I told you how I first became acquainted with Gleason.

"It was an acquaintance begun in imprudence and selfishness on my part, but it brought ruin to one I loved, as you shall hear. It was I who introduced the villain to him. I was reckless. Gleason saw this, and we became partners in smuggling. Finally we quarreled, but it seems that neither reformed.

"Now you shall hear the history of my life. I think it will, in a measure, offset my failing, but it cannot be more strong in my favor than is my regret that I ever sinned.

"I was born in Virginia, of good family, and had one brother. My people were well to do. When I was still young, both my parents died, leaving Claude and myself alone in the world.

"Claude was of age at the time, and papa's will left everything to him, with the understanding that he was to divide up with me, in case we concluded to sell the estate. This was done to avoid any legal technicalities that might prevent a sale, owing to my being a minor."

"I see."

"Well, our money was exhausted in burying our parents, and after due deliberation, we concluded to part with the old home and its belongings.

"Claude was sharp at driving a bargain, and, after a time succeeded in closing out, at a good figure.

"The property brought eight thousand dollars. Then arose the question of how we could get a living off of that amount without touching the principal, for we were both ambitious to save for a rainy day. Eight thousand dollars don't last long, unless carefully nursed, and we were anxious to be as saving as possible of our money.

"Claude and I were very dear to one another, and when Claude proposed that we come to Buffalo and try our fortune here, I readily consented, Claude keeping my share of the money for me, as I considered him more capable of handling it. So we came.

"Claude looked diligently for work, but, being a stranger, found none. Finally, he attended a sheriff's sale. The house now occupied by James Gleason was to be sold under the hammer. Claude must have been drinking, for he made a bid upon it, and it was knocked down to him."

"For how much?"

"Four thousand dollars, and eleven dollars and forty-four cents—the added costs."

"I see! Four, eleven, forty-four?"

"Yes."

"Humph! rather singular!"

"Strangely so! Claude was elated, for he believed that the numbers would surely bring him good luck."

"But, they didn't, eh?"

"No, indeed. Poor Claude fell into bad company, and bad habits. He was naturally rather a gay-dispositioned fellow, and, when urged on by others, as he was, he became wild, and reckless.

"He drank, he gambled, and dissipated generally, in spite of my protests and pleadings, and by the end of two years, he was little better than a common bummer, although he managed to maintain a respectable appearance.

"His evil genius was, as you may guess, Jim Gleason; a man of alleged wealth. He followed Claude everywhere, and introduced him to all the vices extant. They played cards together, billiards together, drank together, and drove together, and Claude, being of a liberal disposition, generally footed all the bills.

"We still retained the house and lot, which was in Claude's name, and which had increased some thousand dollars in value.

"I foresaw that this was what Gleason was laying his snare for; but all to no use

did I warn Claude. He kept on his wild ways, and, finally, our money was gone. He did not desist, even then. Gleason plied him with all the liquor he could drink, and took good care that my poor brother should not draw a sober breath.

"I went to him, Gleason, one day, and begged of him to stop trying to further ruin my dear brother, and for answer he simply laughed.

"Oh! Claude is all right," he said. "Can't you let a fellow have a little fun, if he wants it?"

"This made me wild with anger, and I cried out: 'If any harm comes to my brother, Jim Gleason, through his associations with you, I'll haunt you to the last day you live!'

"Not long after this, poor brother dropped dead. An autopsy was held, and it was agreed that his death was due to alcoholism. James Gleason had been the direct cause of poor Claude's death!"

"I see. You naturally hated him, then?" Dick remarked.

"Hate! Why, that's no name for it! I at once set to work to figure out how to haunt him. I had discovered a secret passageway in the house, and a secret way of entering it. Then, by the aid of sliding panels, I could enter the parlor and the parlor-extension, which he has used as his bedroom.

"I had only discovered these things, when Gleason came forward and foreclosed a mortgage on the house, for the exact amount Claude had paid for it."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. The mortgage had been executed by Claude, had been recorded, and, consequently was valid. I was then more than ever at the mercy of the world, without friends or money. Can you wonder at my intense hatred of Jim Gleason?"

"No, not in the least. I know him, myself, to be an unprincipled scoundrel, and I can tell you one thing which may please you."

"What is that?"

"Gleason and the woman who, he now admits, is his wife, are still engaged in smuggling goods over from Canada. Tomorrow they will find themselves in the station-house, to stand trial for defrauding the Government."

"Good! Now, I can die without a murmur, for I shall be avenged. You will not let them escape you?"

"Not through any fault of mine, rest assured!"

"That's right. See that they pay the full penalty of the law, and I will bless you! Now, all is settled, and I do not care to think further of worldly matters. I thank you for your kindness to me. I shall trouble you no more!"

The words were spoken huskily, and, the next minute, a torrent of blood from the sick girl's mouth poured into the bowl which Stella quickly brought.

When the hemorrhage had ceased, Mabel fell back upon the bed, with a low moan.

There were a few long-drawn breaths, and then a cessation of them altogether.

Mabel Madden's spirit had passed to that bourne from which none returneth.

Gently Stella closed her eyelids, and with a motion to Dick, they quietly withdrew from the room.

"Well, the poor thing is out of her trouble," Stella sighed, when they reached the parlor.

"Yes, and perhaps she could not have recovered, anyhow. Possibly it is well that her suffering should be brought to a speedy termination. Has she money?"

"Yes, sufficient to bury her respectably. She gave it into my keeping, several hours ago, and I will take charge of the details, at her request."

"Very well. I suppose there is no way I can make myself useful? If not, I think I will be going."

"You may, if you please, notify her physician and, also, an undertaker."

"I will do so, gladly. After that, my business is with Gleason."

"Shall you arrest him, at once?"

"It is too late to procure a warrant, tonight. I shall do this the first thing in the morning."

"I wish to say," Stella added, "that I have learned that Gleason and his wife have become reconciled. They have had many quarrels, but always come together again."

"Exactly; I have the same news. When the wife called on me at the hotel she was hot for his life-blood, as it were, but, immediately after, she received a note from him of a conciliatory nature. Within half an hour she was at his house, and they made up, though he stoutly denied it to me."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CLOSING CAMPAIGN.

AFTER obtaining the physician's address, Deadwood Dick left Stella. He attended to the business with which she had intrusted him, and then returned to where Billy awaited him.

He regretted that a warrant could not be had for Gleason's arrest at once, but there seemed to be no danger that he would take alarm. The detective was tempted to pass the night with the smuggler, or try to, but Gleason had requested that their visits be discontinued if the ghost came no more, and both Dick and Billy Bucket were in need of rest.

They then sought their rooms at the hotel, and indulged in the best sleep they had had since their arrival in Buffalo.

"They were astir early, however, and, after a breakfast in company with Herr Ennis, they went to a magistrate and swore out a warrant for the arrest of James Gleason, for smuggling."

It was given to Dick, and accompanied by a stalwart policeman, the detectives set out for Black Rock.

They arrived at Niagara street in good time—too early, if anything; so at Dick's suggestion, they did not immediately approach the house, but kept a close watch upon it to see if they could detect any signs of life.

But, up to nine o'clock there had been no stir whatever.

"What did it mean?"

"It looks as if there wasn't any one at home," Dick observed.

"Yes, it does," chimed in Billy. "I'll bet a green apple for a gooseberry we're too late!"

Herr Ennis shrugged his burly shoulders in a deprecatory manner, and lit his long meerschaum.

"It may be," he admitted. "We vil find us oud noddings by remaining here."

That is true enough. Come, let's investigate!" and they moved up the street at a brisk pace.

The nearest house to Gleason's was twenty feet away, and a high, tight board fence on either side shut off the view of the neighbors.

A murder might have been committed in Gleason's residence, with the side windows wide open, without any one's knowledge, except they obtained a view from the street front.

Dick ran up the steps and rung the bell, Ennis and Billy following close at her heels.

No answer; all was silent within.

Dick rung again and again.

The third ring brought the man-servant.

"I want to see your master!" Dick declared.

"You can't, sir. He is not here."

"Not here? Where is he?"

"Moved to Canada, I believe!" was the reply.

"Then, what are you doing here?"

"Sweeping out, sir, so the man who bought the place can move in."

"Who is that?"

"Don't know his name. He paid down the cash, though, for I saw him do it."

"To what part of Canada did Gleason go?"

"He didn't say."

"Did his wife go with him?"

"Yes."

"Can we have a look through the house?"

"Yes, for all I care."

They made a thorough search of the premises, in every nook and corner, but without a discovery of anything valuable, except the furniture, which had been purchased with the house.

"Well, we're dished!" admitted Dick, in disgust. "It's the first time I've got left in the whole course of my detective experience. If Gleason has gone to Canada, he is out of the jurisdiction of the United States, so the jig is up, most decidedly."

"Vel, mine friend, v'ot can't pe cured, must pe endured. Von can't expect to vin der game effery time, or dot odder fellers could not smile. Don'd you see?"

"Plain as a brick wall!" put in Billy.

"At all events," added Dick, "there's no use of our remaining here any longer. The bird has flown, and I'm not going to spend any more time looking for it."

The next day unfortunate Mabel Madden was buried.

By that time Deadwood Dick had satisfied himself that Gleason was really gone. He was known to have crossed to Canada with his wife.

The detective spent no time in mourning. The escaped man had been his employer, not his game, and he had done what he had been summoned to Buffalo to do; the ghost mystery was solved. Besides this, Gleason had been generous, and, though the promised reward was lacking, the several advances counted up well.

Dick did not forget to reward Stella Starr, and that young lady was fortunate enough to have a good situation all ready for her.

The next day Dick and Billy reported to the chief of police. Then, after bidding good-by to Ennis, the detectives started back to New York.

THE END.

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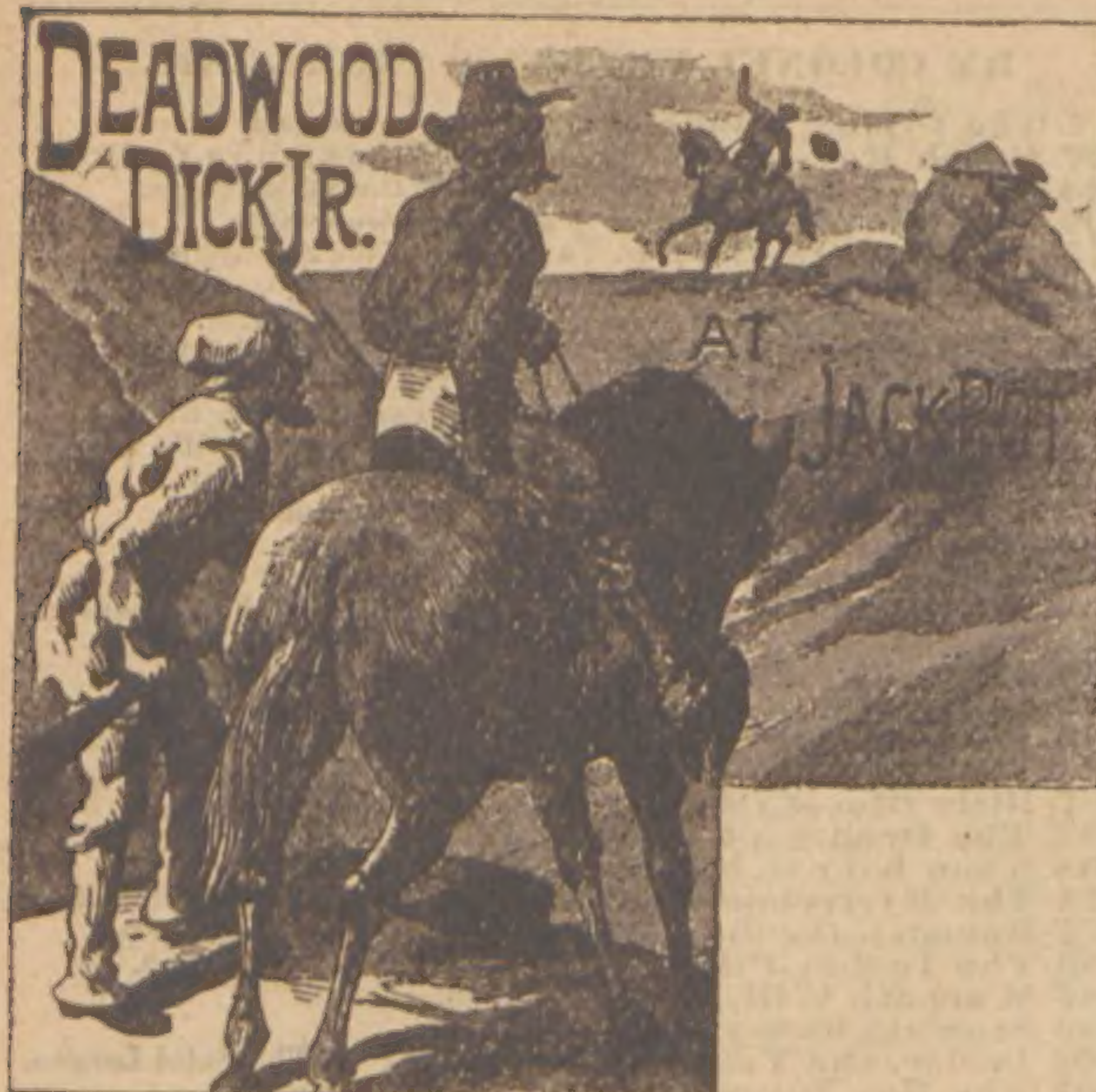
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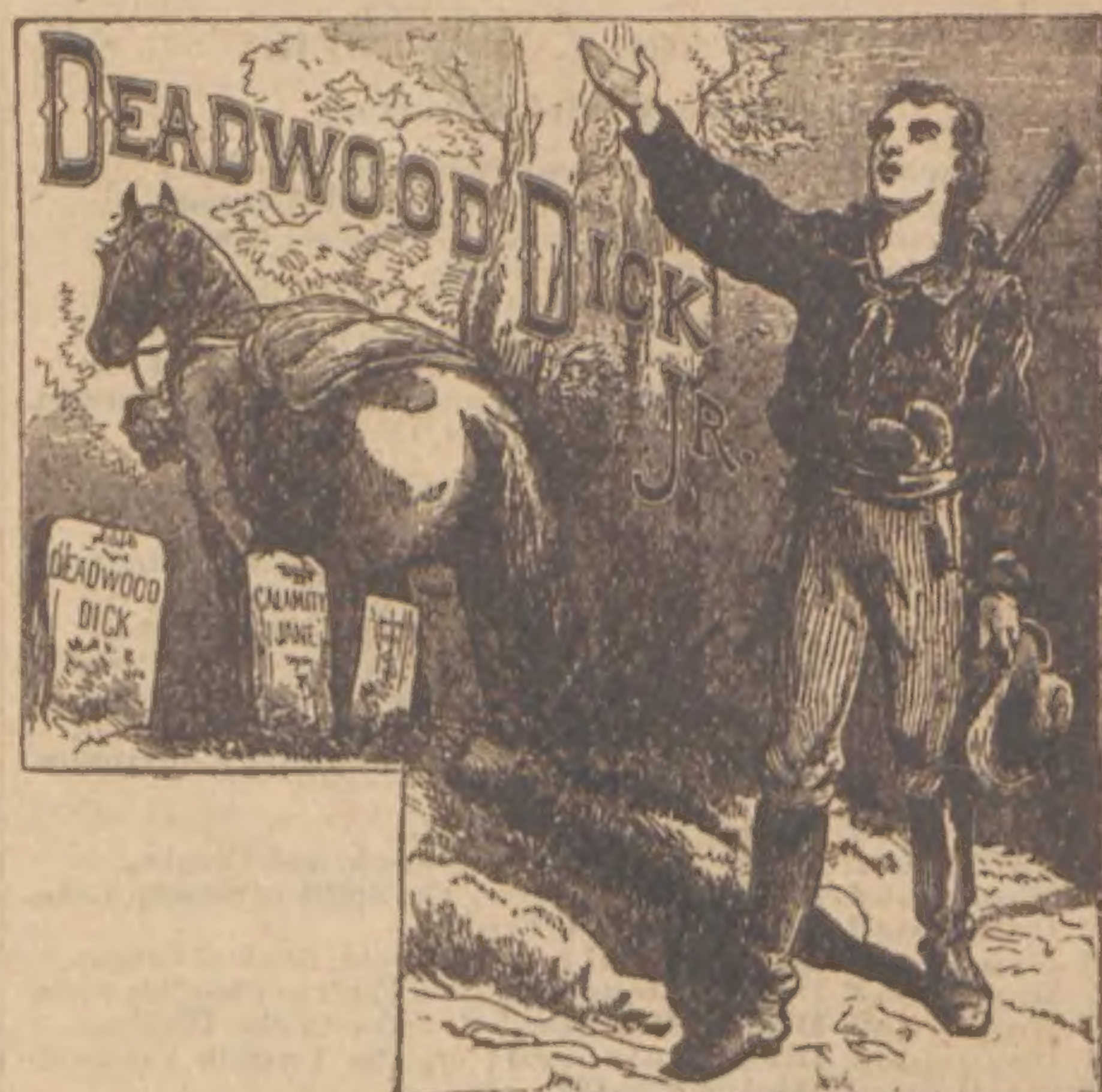
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